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SIXTY YEARS' LIFE AND ADVENTURE
IN THE FAR EAST



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James Dill Ross.

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SIXTY YEARS :

Life and Adventure in the Far East - -

BY
✓
JOHN DILL ROSS

*With 25 Illustrations
including 3 Photogravure Plates and a Map*

SECOND EDITION

VOLUME I.

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PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1912

TO MY WIFE

P R E F A C E

IT was my fate to remain perforce in Odessa during a perilous and miserable period, when the Port was a sea of flame and the scene of massacre and terror. Later, strikes on the rail-ways, in the post and telegraph services, and among the sailors and engineers of the steamship companies, accompanied by continued disorders, paralysed the trade of Southern Russia. I had practically nothing to do and found my enforced idleness weigh heavily on me.

During this crisis my thoughts constantly reverted to my long and singularly adventurous career in the lands and seas of the Far East. I remembered those of my family who had preceded me in distant regions, and I finally set to work to write the story of men and things now vanished, and of a society of which no description yet exists. I believe that I must be one of the few men now living who possess the material necessary to construct such a record as will be found in these volumes.

JOHN DILL ROSS.

Odessa, March 16/29th, 1911.

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MALAY, OR EAST INDIAN ARCHIPELAGO WITH BURMA & SIAM

BURMA
(British)

BURMA
(British)

SIAM

BANG-KOK

CAMBODIA
(French)

SAIGON
(French)

Quin hon

Hon che Har
Nha trang
Padaran B

Hong Kong

Shanghai 1855
Nagasaki 1854
Sokotsu 1858
Nagasaki 1855

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
(United States)

LUZON

Manila Bay

PANAY

Iloilo
Cebu

MINDANAO

Zamboanga

NORTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN

INDIAN OCEAN

MALACCA STRAIT
SUMATRA
(Dutch)

JOHORE
SINGAPORE

CHINA SEA

BRITISH NORTH BORNEO
Kudat
Abaja
Jesselton
Labuan Is.
BRUNEI
SARAWAK
Kuching

Sulu
Sandakan
Darvel B

CELEBES SEA

BORNEO
(Dutch)

Menado

MOLUCCA ISLANDS

Ternate

Amboina

Banda Is.

PAPUA OR NEW GUINEA
(Dutch)

JAVA SEA

BATAVIA

JAVA
(Dutch)

Sourabaya

MACASSAR

Lombok

ARAFURA SEA

Sixty Years' Life and Adventure In the Far East

INTRODUCTION

THE BRITISH IN BORNEO

THE romance of British history in Borneo commences with the arrival of James Brooke, on board of his armed yacht the *Royalist*, in the Sarawak River, in the month of August, 1839.

The country at that time was in a terribly disturbed and anarchical condition. The Sultan of Brunei had entrusted the government of Sarawak to Pangeran Makota, a type of native chief only too common then as now. The cruelties and exactions of this man ended by driving the people of Sarawak into open revolt. The rebellion was secretly nursed by the Sultan of Sambas from across the border, and also by the Dutch, who had the Sultan under their thumb.

Had it not been for the arrival of James Brooke at this critical moment we should not now possess a single square foot of territory in Borneo. The whole of this magnificent island would have been under the Dutch flag.

Omar Ali, Sultan of Brunei, sent his uncle, the Rajah Muda Hassim, to crush the insurrection. The Rajah was altogether of a different type from the hideous Pangeran Makota, but he possessed neither the determination of the latter nor his ability to deal with a position

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of extreme danger and difficulty, and his affairs were in a very bad way when the *Royalist* anchored off his palace.

The Rajah was an essentially humane man, and, at any rate, he had sufficient intelligence to recognize that in James Brooke he had found the one man living who could save him and his country.

Rarely indeed have gifts of the highest and noblest order been so concentrated in any one man as in the person of James Brooke.

From the day that Brooke espoused the cause of Muda Hassim his troubles commenced—troubles which flew upon him thick and fast, and never ceased until the day of his death in a remote Devonshire village.

Brooke's first task was to subdue the rebellion, and none but those who have had to deal with native chiefs and their followers can conceive what a heart-breaking business it was. He had to consider Malays, Dyaks, Arabs, and a strong Chinese element, together with their diverse methods of thought and action. All the chiefs whom he commanded were lazy and inconsequent, while many of them were cowardly and treacherous.

Brooke endeavoured to capture the enemy's principal position at Balidah, but although the guns landed from the *Royalist* were splendidly served by his crew and practically wrecked the fort, nothing could induce Muda Hassim's forces to attack a place already tottering to its fall. Brooke was so disgusted with the cowardice of the Rajah's people, that he threatened to leave Sarawak altogether and abandon the country to its fate. The Rajah persuaded him to remain, and for the first time suggested that James Brooke should take over the government of the country. This offer was declined, but Brooke consented once more to lead the Rajah's forces, and assault Balidah.

Let us imagine a sultry, steaming day, a muddy river winding its course through a dense Bornean forest, with clearings here and there, in which were erected the forts

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and stockades of the contending forces. Brooke's men from the *Royalist* had dragged their six-pounders over a difficult country, so as to command the enemy's main position at Balidah. Once more the roar of the British guns was heard, as they cut up the rebel works with great effect.

Meanwhile numerous bodies of Muda Hassim's troops were silently creeping through the jungle paths, all converging on Balidah. They had reached the very verge of the forest unsuspected by the garrison, and a short rush across the open was all that was necessary to secure the victory and deal the enemy a shattering blow. At this precise moment one of the Rajah's chiefs started shouting his prayers at the top of his voice—a treacherous trick, which succeeded in its intention of warning the enemy. The rebels opened a spattering fire, which killed one solitary man of the attacking force. The latter thereupon made a general bolt for the depths of the jungle, and all was over. Brooke was furious, but the whole affair was typical of fighting in Borneo.

The rebels were encouraged by the failure of the operations against their stronghold to take the offensive. They assaulted the Rajah's positions at Sekundis, and were carrying everything before them, when Brooke appeared upon the scene with a force consisting of twelve Englishmen and two natives, and not only stopped their victorious advance, but converted it into a rout. The panic-stricken rebels fled in all directions, abandoning their weapons as they ran.

The Rajah's army exhibited the greatest keenness in pursuing the beaten enemy and, hunting down the flying insurgents into the river, slaughtered them remorselessly.

Shortly afterwards Balidah surrendered without another shot being fired against it, and from that moment the civil war was practically at an end.

In September, 1841, Rajah Muda Hassim again proposed to Brooke that he should become the Rajah of

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Sarawak. This time Brooke accepted the offer in the interests of the country.

In due course the Sultan confirmed the arrangement made between Muda Hassim and James Brooke, who thus became Rajah Brooke of Sarawak.

The princes of Borneo, as will be seen in subsequent pages, have more than once offered the government of vast territories to other Europeans who enjoyed their confidence. Even such a humble personage as the man who is now writing this book has had his chance of becoming a reigning rajah. Many years ago the Sultan of Brunei proposed to him that he should become the Rajah of Paláwan. This brilliant offer was coupled with certain conditions of a mercantile and somewhat sordid order. It is not given to every Briton, however, to wear the mantle of the first Rajah Brooke. There seemed to be various acute and imminent dangers connected with the sovereignty of Paláwan, such as the slitting of a certain throat, or some equally painful end to a brief and troubled existence, however elevated, which caused the Sultan's proposal to be rejected with considerable enthusiasm.

As soon as Rajah Brooke had taken over the government of Sarawak, Rajah Muda Hassim sailed for Brunei, with an endless retinue of wives, officials, retainers, and hangers-on of every kind. The Rajah was received with great honours at the Court, and appointed Prime Minister to the Sultan Omar Ali.

At about this period, the Sultan offered to cede the Island of Labuan to Great Britain, and the beautiful harbour and valuable coal-mines of this new possession induced our Government to close with the offer.

Rajah Muda Hassim's authority and influence at the Court of Brunei increased until the envy of his enemies was excited. They had small difficulty in persuading the weak and cruel Sultan that the Rajah was plotting his deposition. In 1846 the tyrant ordered the destruction of Muda Hassim and his entire family. Late one night,

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after a magnificent banquet offered by the Sultan to the Rajah and his relatives, the latter were allowed to retire to their homes. A few minutes later the Sultan gave the signal for the massacre to commence, and it was immediately carried out with the most horrid ferocity. The houses of the Rajah and his dependents were fired, and as the doomed people rushed out to save themselves from the flames, they were butchered, man, woman, and child. The unhappy Muda Hassim shot himself rather than fall into the hands of the assassins. The gallant Pangeran Budruddin, the Rajah's brother, after being desperately wounded, fired a barrel of gunpowder, and blew himself to pieces, together with two of his women who asked to share his death. Several other Brunei nobles of the royal blood were murdered during that night of horror.

The dawn of day revealed the sickening sight of a bloody shambles amidst smoking ruins. The Rajah Muda Hassim, his wives and children, relatives, friends and dependents were all destroyed to the very last soul.

In 1843 Captain Keppel arrived at Kuching in H.M.S. *Dido*, the first British man-of-war to visit Sarawak, an event which opened up a new era for Rajah Brooke and his country. Keppel was anxious to assist Brooke in suppressing the pirates who laid waste the coasts and rivers of Borneo and were the curse and scourge of the whole country.

This was a very difficult and dangerous adventure. The powerful Arab slave-dealers were wealthy and well organized. The Sekarang Dyaks are a fighting race. But under such leaders as Keppel and Brooke all obstacles were overcome. Their British sailors found it to be terribly toilsome to drag their heavy boats, under a burning sun, up rivers obstructed by rafts and trunks of trees, while the jungle simply swarmed with their savage foes; but nothing could daunt the cheery courage of these fine fellows, who inspired their native allies with unbounded confidence.

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The expedition led by Keppel and Brooke made short work of the fortifications up the Batang Lupar river. The forts were rushed and captured after severe fighting. The pirates suffered heavily in killed and wounded. They lost no less than sixty-five brass guns, besides a number of iron cannons found in and about the forts. The headquarters of five thousand pirates were burned to the ground. It was a severe blow to a formidable enemy.

Proceeding up the Batang Lupar, the expedition was beset by all sorts of difficulties and dangers. Heavy rains added to the depressing surroundings of the attacking force, and then came another battle. The aspects of fighting Borneo pirates in their own rivers are best described by Keppel himself.

“It is difficult to describe the scene as I found it,” he says. “About twenty boats were jammed together, forming one confused mass, some bottom up, the bows and sterns of others only visible, mixed up pell-mell with huge rafts—and amongst which were nearly all our advanced division. Headless trunks, as well as heads without bodies, were lying about; parties hand-to-hand spearing and stabbing one another, others striving to swim for their lives; and entangled in the common mêlée were our advanced boats, while on both banks thousands of Dyaks were rushing down to join in the slaughter, hurling stones and spears on the boats below.”

Truly a stirring picture!

The operations of Keppel and Brooke in the Batang Lupar region were brought to a successful conclusion. The once powerful and ruffianly Arab slave-traders were either killed or fled across the border, broken men, without a single follower. The blow dealt to a very powerful confederation of the worst pirates in Borneo was terrible, and their extermination was of untold benefit to the people and the country at large. The ravages of the pirates were ruining Borneo, while their wanton cruelty is beyond description.

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Take, for instance, the case of Captain James Ross, the owner of the British barque *Regina*, captured by Borneo pirates. The unhappy man was suspected of having a large sum in dollars on board. This was not the case, however, as he had invested his money in rattans, rubber, and other produce of no particular use to the pirates. In order to make Captain Ross confess where his non-existent treasure was hidden, the pirates commenced by lashing his son, a bright young lad, to one of the ship's anchors, which was then flung overboard. This being of no effect, they tortured James Ross for hours. They cut his fingers off, joint by joint, at long intervals, and inflicted other mutilations on him. He was finally left a bleeding but breathing mass on his quarter-deck, when the pirates, after killing his officers and taking the native crew for slaves, set the ship on fire and left it.

Many a trading ship met with a similar fate, but the chief devastation wrought by the pirates was amongst the natives themselves. They not only ravaged the coasts, but penetrated far into the interior by means of the Borneo rivers. The natives were never safe. At any moment they might be attacked, and then the old story would be re-enacted of boats seized or destroyed, of villages burned to the ground, of crops laid waste, and of women carried off by their savage captors.

The cruelty of these people was incredible. To them the prolonged torturing of a helpless man or woman was an amusement of the most enjoyable order, and any expedient which could add to the agony of the victim was eagerly applauded.

When Rajah Brooke became the ruler of Sarawak, it was inhabited by races of an apparently hopeless type. The leading men of the country, generally, were head-hunters, slave-traders and robbers. Sometimes they would fight very well, at other times they would bolt in abject fear from an inferior enemy. Their women were their slaves, and together with the captives taken in various

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forays did such work as could be done. The type being cruel, vicious and lazy to an incredible degree, it might be asked what could be done for such people. But Keppel and Brooke saw below the surface. Brooke had early arrived at a correct estimate of the real character of the native, while Keppel formed a high idea of the future of both the country and its people *under good government*.

The amazing part of the whole history is that two men, the two white Rajahs of Sarawak, Sir James Brooke and Sir Charles Brooke, have in something like sixty years made a peaceful and highly progressive country out of these infernal regions. They seem to have eradicated the horrid vices of their subjects, and transformed them into a peaceable and pleasant population. There are few countries in which travel is to-day so safe as in Sarawak, and it is rare to meet with any white man who has had any experience of the people who does not speak appreciatively of their kindness and hospitality.

From about 1844 the star of Rajah Brooke was in the ascendant, and everything prospered under his rule. In 1847 he visited England, where he was graciously received by Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle, and was the recipient of many honours. By the time he returned in 1848 he was Sir James Brooke, K.C.B., Rajah of Sarawak and Governor of Labuan.

The Rajah returned to Sarawak on board H.M.S. *Mæander*, under the command of his old friend Captain Keppel, and met with a magnificent reception from his subjects.

The establishment of Labuan was attended by serious difficulties and calamities, chiefly due to the inexperience of certain officials from Singapore, who built the settlement on a grassy plain, which became a swamp in wet weather. Sir Spenser St. John describes the circumstances of the colony in 1848:

“While the rain fell in torrents, the sea washed under

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the houses, luckily built on piles ; but the stores of the unhappy people were ruined, and, to crown all, the deadly Lauban fever made its appearance and claimed its victims. The marines and bluejackets were the first to suffer from this fever, which carried off several of them. The next to succumb were the Chinese and Indian servants. Sir James Brooke and nearly the whole of his staff, including the Colonial surgeon, fell ill of the fever, a most dangerous and depressing disease. A regular panic set in, and everybody who could possibly get away from the island left Labuan. At this juncture there were probably more inhabitants in the dismal cemetery of Labuan than in the settlement itself."

Labuan suffered greatly from its unenviable reputation as a fever-haunted and deadly island.

The Seribas Dyaks now became a source of great trouble and danger. They laid waste Sadong and other districts, and committed atrocities of every kind.

To put down this, Rajah Brooke left, in July, 1849, for the Rejang River, at the head of a force of some three thousand men, supported by Her Majesty's ship *Nemesis*, and boats from the *Albatross* and *Royalist*. The Rajah surprised the pirate fleet of ninety-eight vessels at the mouth of the river, and brought them to action. The battle was so decisive that not more than twelve vessels out of the entire pirate fleet were able to make their escape up the river. Sir Spenser St. John gives the dimensions of one of the pirate ships: Length, eighty feet; breadth, nine feet; and seventy oars. He adds the following details of discoveries made after the battle:

"The pirates murdered all their girl captives, and after shocking mutilations, cut off their heads and escaped. Proofs of the piracies committed by the Seribas fleet were found on every side. The pirates had captured two vessels trading to Singapore, and had devastated numerous villages on shore. Baskets full of the heads of their unhappy victims were found in every village."

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The results of the Rajah's remarkable expedition were hailed with delight by the native chiefs and their people, as it relieved them from the oppression of an abominable terror, and promised them something like safety for life and property.

Rajah Brooke, having defeated in turn the Sekarang and Seribas pirates, ought at last to have been left in peace to develop his principality. But there was a storm brewing in England—of all places in the world—which was now to burst upon him in all its fury, and which menaced him with ruin and dishonour.

The Rajah had selected for his agent in London a certain Mr. Wise, who has been described as "a man of considerable ability, but no honour." Anxious to make a fortune for himself, Wise projected a kind of East Asiatic Archipelago Company, based on huge territorial concessions to be granted to this company by the Rajah. His Highness, however, decided to have nothing to do with Wise's great scheme, as he saw very clearly into the facts concerning it. The scheme was all right for Wise, but it would not be a good thing for the British investor, or for the native of the country. Sarawak was not yet prepared for operations on a great scale, even if they had been honestly conceived.

The Brooke policy, which is actively in force to this day, has invariably been to protect the people, not only from the pirates of the coast, but also from the speculator who comes from afar. Let any man go to-day to Sarawak, with sufficient capital to open up some useful industry, and he will find that the Government will treat him well, and render him every assistance. But the company-promoting humbug, or the sort of person who acquires valuable property from the natives in exchange for cheap and showy articles, will find himself under due pressure, promptly applied, squeezed out of Sarawak.

Wise, vindictive and astute, determined to destroy the Rajah and his government, an object he very nearly

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achieved by transforming the commercial question into a purely political movement, based on the strongly humanitarian sentiments so popular with a section of the British public. Wise soon found a London newspaper willing to serve his ends, and succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of such prominent men as Hume, Cobden and Gladstone in his campaign against the Rajah of Sarawak.

He now openly denounced his former master as "a murderer and a robber." Cobden declared that Sir James Brooke, having seized on a territory as large as Yorkshire, drove the natives out of it, and subsequently sent for British forces to massacre them.

The "methods of barbarity" card was played for all it was worth. Sir James Brooke was held up to public execration as a rapacious and bloodthirsty monster, while his victim, the harmless, necessary pirate of Sekarang or Seribas, became the object of intense public sympathy.

Rajah Brooke was overwhelmed by the skilfully-engineered storm of obloquy which broke upon him. The vigour and ability with which he defended his civilizing policy was of no avail. The agitation against him was so great, that in order to secure the support of the Free Trade Party, Lord Aberdeen consented to issue a Commission on the lines proposed by the enemies of the Rajah, who was there and then dismissed from Her Majesty's service, an unmerited disgrace, which was keenly felt.

Sir James Brooke had ultimately to undergo the humiliation of appearing before a Commission at Singapore, which, however, was quite unable to find any fault with his proceedings and acquitted him.

The treatment of the Rajah led to the most disastrous results. It naturally weakened his authority, and broke down the pride and the health of the man. Keppel writes of him: "I found the great and good Rajah still under the persecution of his former agent, Mr. Wise. Sir James was a wreck of his former self."

In 1857 yet another disaster befell the Rajah, which

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was nothing less than the Chinese rebellion led by the Gold Kongsis of Bau. It resulted in the capture and destruction of the capital of Sarawak.

The Chinese miners from Bau pulled down the river in barges and made their wholly unexpected attack in Kuching at midnight. A large body made for Government House, with the intention of killing the Rajah; but his Highness had been roused by their shouts and cut his way through their midst, sword in hand, and swam across the river for assistance. In a short time Government House and various other large buildings went up in flames. The Chief of the Gold Kongsis assumed the administration of the city next day. Meanwhile, Chinese were killing and plundering in all directions, and had set the Malay town on fire.

Rajah Brooke now appeared upon the scene with some hastily recruited levies, and sharp fighting ensued, with doubtful results, for the Chinese rebels having seized the arsenal were much better armed than the royalists. A very critical situation was ended by the sudden arrival of the Borneo Company's steamer, *Sir James Brooke*, which at once opened fire on the rebels. The English guns were too much for the Chinese, who were seized by a panic and fled in all directions, closely pursued by the vengeful Malays and Dyaks. Tracked through the jungles, beaten at every stand they made, the wretched insurgents were all killed with the exception of those who managed to escape over the Sambas frontier. But Kuching was left a heap of smouldering ruins, and the Rajah had to make his temporary headquarters on board the Borneo Company's steamer.

Kuching rapidly rose from its ruins, and the kingdom of Sarawak made steady progress. But the unfortunate Rajah was worn out by an unparalleled series of struggles and persecutions. He finally went home, where he found himself poor and pressed for money. A fund for his benefit was privately raised by a few friends, which enabled him to buy a small property at Burrator, near Dartmoor, where he died on the 11th of June, 1868.

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Such was the end of the strange and gifted man who was born at Benares on the 29th of April, 1803.

A more remarkable and useful career has seldom been lived. His whole life-story is one more illustration of how hard a thing it is to serve the interests of Great Britain from purely unselfish motives without being destroyed in the process.

British public opinion is a very strange monster indeed. It will rend a man to pieces and then become inordinately proud of him. Is there not a statue to Sir Bartle Frere? The fate of that magnificent man, Sir Stamford Raffles, was even more tragic than that of Sir James Brooke. Raffles, the man who gave us such priceless possessions as Java and the Spice Islands, and who was the founder of the splendid colony of Singapore, died in England at the age of forty-five in such obscurity that not a soul knows to-day where his body is buried. But Raffles has his statue also on the Singapore Esplanade, albeit it happens to be a particularly bad one, consisting largely of somewhat scantily-attired legs—as if these were the chief things about a man of genius to be perpetuated in bronze! Should there not be a statue of Sir James Brooke at Kuching, and a really good one?

The mere private person, toiling for others and doing his utmost for his masters, may also have his life embittered and cut short by the stabs of envy, malice and hatred. For him there will be no statue, good or bad. If he finally attains to the dignity of a cheap coffin, he will end better than others equally disinterested and zealous.

Sir James Brooke was fortunate in enjoying to the very last the devoted friendship of such men as Admiral Sir Henry Keppel and Sir Spenser St. John. It seems, also, to have been a fortunate circumstance for the Rajah and his country that the Borneo Company, Limited, was founded. It is not suitable to discuss the affairs of the Borneo Company in these pages, but it may be truly said that during an honourable existence of more than

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fifty years this company has rendered very great services in developing the agricultural, trading and mining resources of the country. The Borneo Company has also provided Sarawak with a regular and excellent steamship service, of which the value can hardly be over-estimated.

But the crowning mercy of Sir James Brooke's closing days was that he had found in his own nephew a worthy successor to the throne of Sarawak.

Under the sway of the present Rajah, Sir Charles Brooke, the borders of the country have been widely extended. Progress and prosperity have gone hand in hand under a wise and just Government. Both the white Rajahs of Sarawak have displayed the great quality of knowing how to choose their men. The officials of the Sarawak Government carry out their difficult duties admirably, and are always in touch and sympathy with the people whom they assist in governing.

The remarkable success of Sarawak is doubtless due to the fact that it has been administered, according to their own ideas, by two rulers of remarkable ability and courage, two men who have lived their lives in the country itself. They have not been fettered and checked at every turn, or made to carry out acts of incredible folly, by ministers and permanent officials thousands of miles away. Nor when the Rajah of Sarawak is constructing public works is he compelled to get his men and materials through "Crown Agents."

Another remarkable feature of the history of Sarawak is that the country has in some way been preserved for British commerce. The neighbouring territory of British North Borneo is overrun by Germans, who have driven every British steamer off the coast and secured all its communications by sea for their own flag. The Chartered Company seems to be either unwilling or unable to subsidize a British steamship service.

The phenomenal achievements of such men as Sir Stamford Raffles and the two white Rajahs of Sarawak and

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their lieutenants are without parallel in the modern history of any other nation, and can only be explained by their unflinching courage, their indomitable perseverance, and their perfect sense of justice.

Many of us know how some son of the British Empire, living a life of incredible hardship, in a hut on the bank of a muddy stream in some forgotten jungle, really rules the people of a vast district. In some way the lost Briton conquers the confidence of native chiefs, pacifies long-standing feuds, and charms the natives into raising crops and cattle, no longer regarding a human head as an object to be snatched from the shoulders of its owner.

Most fortunately there will always be Englishmen, Scots, or Irishmen, as the case may be, eager to lead a dog's life in some tropical country, with the chance of a dog's death to end it, so long as their craving for an adventurous career and their desire to serve their country are satisfied.

It is necessary to have at least some idea of the characters of such men, in order to understand the pages of this story.

Quite the best book about Sarawak is that just published by Mr. Baring Gould and Mr. C. A. Bampfylde, a really excellent and much-needed work. Perhaps the finest thing it contains is the Preface, written by His Highness the Rajah in the true spirit of the Brookes.*

* "A History of Sarawak Under its Two White Rajahs," by S. Baring Gould and C. A. Bampfylde. Henry Sotheran & Co. See also "Rajah Brooke," by Sir Spenser St. John. T. Fisher Unwin. "A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns," by Admiral Sir Henry Keppel. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD

THE following lines appear in a little book printed in Singapore in 1898 :*

“The real heroes of British history in this part of the world are such splendid men as Sir Stamford Raffles and the first Rajah Brooke of Sarawak. Their names will never be forgotten, but much useful work in preparing the way for our gigantic commerce of to-day has been done by brave men whom none will remember. The trading captains of the old days made their money very fast, and got as much of it as they wanted, but they seldom succeeded in keeping it. Their fortune was generally entrusted to some one or another who made away with it in the end. Many trading captains have been lost in uncharted seas, murdered by pirates, or stricken down by fever in the midst of their career. They led a stirring life of it, did useful work, and were altogether an interesting race of men.”

Of all these brave men probably none was more generally successful or had a wider experience than Captain John Dillon Northwood. The son of a sea-captain, he was born in Batavia, and when quite young he was sent to Australia, where he was educated under the care of the Rev. Mr. White, a worthy clergyman for whom his pupil had a great esteem and affection. Returning to Batavia, he

* “The Capital of a Little Empire : A Descriptive Study of a British Crown Colony in the Far East.” By John Dill Ross. Reprinted from the *Singapore Free Press*.

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made a voyage to Holland and back in a Dutch East Indiaman, and thus commenced his career as a sailor. For some time he acted as assistant and secretary to Mr. Ross, the owner of the Cocos Islands. Young Northwood was singularly fortunate in gaining the confidence of his master, who probably had no small share in moulding the character of his youthful assistant. This Ross was a most remarkable man, a very fine character, whose life was a veritable romance in itself.

Young Northwood made friendships amongst the little European colony on the Cocos Islands, which he kept up for long years afterward. At the age of twenty-seven he married a young lady of seventeen, the daughter of a captain who had arranged with his agent's wife to leave his little girl in her care for just one trip. However, it happened to be the last voyage ever made by Captain Bell. He sailed from Batavia, but neither he nor his ship were ever heard of again. Probably he was cut off by pirates, a fate which was by no means extraordinary in those days. The little girl's mother being already dead, Mr. and Mrs. Gray brought her up as one of their own children until the day when she married young Northwood.

The newly wedded couple lived very happily at the Cocos until the death of their patron, Mr. Ross, when Northwood decided to quit the Cocos, and to try his luck in the Australian goldfields. The gold-fever was then at its height, and apparently he had caught it pretty badly. But it was an extraordinary project for a young man living in the Cocos with his wife and a little son which she had recently presented to him, and it was carried out in an extraordinary way.

Going to Batavia to realize his plans, Northwood came across a revenue cutter which, built to the order of the Dutch Government, had been rejected on account of certain defects. Northwood inspected the cutter, which was quite new, and, deciding that such defects as there were could

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be made good at small expense, he purchased the little packet. He christened her the *Caroline*, after his wife, and forthwith assumed his first command, and the title of captain, without troubling the Board of Trade or anybody else about such things as examinations or certificates. Many things were done in those days which would appear highly improper in the present generation.

Northwood sailed his cutter to the Cocos, where he took his wife and child on board. As these islands do not produce much else but coco-nuts, it occurred to the enterprising owner to fill the hold of his little boat with them, and this turned out to be a lucky speculation in the end. The *Caroline*, with the traditional crew of "two men and a boy"—who happened to be Malays—left the Cocos on their adventurous cruise to far-off Australia.

The voyage had its incidents, one of the most important of which was that during rough weather the captain's watch slipped out of his hand and fell with a crash on the deck. It was a clumsy but strong sort of watch, not to be easily stopped. It was going all right when Northwood picked it up, but the glass face was smashed and the minute hand of the watch had disappeared. There was, of course, no such thing as a chronometer on board of the *Caroline*, and the only guide to time henceforward at the disposal of her captain was the stumpy hour-hand of a battered watch. Albeit Captain Northwood had passed no examinations, and possessed no certificate, he must have been something of a sailor, for in due time he brought the *Caroline* safely into Melbourne, where he got alongside a wharf which towered over the tiny cockboat.

Presently quite a crowd collected about the wharf, and many were the doubts expressed that such a diminutive craft as the *Caroline* could possibly have sailed the thousands of miles which separate the Cocos from Melbourne. However, the hatch was taken off and showed the *Caroline* to be loaded to the utmost of her capacity with green coco-nuts, which could only come from some tropical

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island. Suddenly a man in the crowd flung a shilling on the deck below him, and shouted "Hand me up a coco-nut!" He promptly had one of the nuts chucked up to him, and this deal fixed the price of coco-nuts for the day. Shilling after shilling pattered on the deck of the *Caroline*, while the crew was kept busy pitching up coco-nuts to eager buyers, until no more were left. As the coco-nuts cost Northwood absolutely nothing, this particular adventure showed a handsome profit. In long years afterwards, when the Captain had been giving one of his big dinner-parties in his luxurious home in Singapore, he remarked confidentially to his son, as the guests were driving off in their carriages: "I don't mind telling you, Johnnie, that the cloth we had on our table this evening was many sizes larger than the *Caroline's* mainsail."

Captain Northwood had trusty friends in Melbourne, who promised to look after his wife and child while he went off to seek for golden treasure. The *Caroline* was sold for what the gallant little packet would fetch. The Dutch authorities, who thought she was not good enough to go "nosing" round the Java coast on preventive service, might have felt some mild surprise if they had been told that the condemned cutter had been sailed to Australia.

Northwood's experiences in a mining camp need not be related, similar stories having often been told. His usual good fortune did not follow him to the camp. He made about enough to pay his expenses, but not much more, and having discovered that gold was not to be shovelled out of the ground in big nuggets except by a favoured few, he was cured of the gold-fever. Then the real fever of his life seized upon him—the sea-fever, which never quitted him until his last day. He got back to Melbourne, where he found his wife and child in the best of health, and began to make plans for the future.

Ships were cheap in Melbourne in those days. As soon as a vessel got into the port, captain, officers and crew all raced off to the goldfields to make their fortunes. As for

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their ship, she could just take care of herself, and anybody who wanted could have her. Melbourne harbour was blocked with deserted shipping. Northwood had small difficulty in purchasing a beautiful brig named the *Wild Irish Girl* for a mere song. His difficulty was to get a crew to work the brig. He had still got his original two and a half Malays from the *Caroline* as a nucleus, and later recruited a sufficient number of awful vagabonds, who had their own reasons for wanting to quit Australia, to make up his quota. The *Wild Irish Girl* was a real ship with some sort of a crew on board, so he could feel that he had some reason for calling himself Captain Northwood.

This seems to be an appropriate opportunity for describing what manner of man John Dillon Northwood happened to be at this period of his history. He stood fully six feet high in his stocking-soles. A massive and powerful head was finely poised on a pair of immense shoulders. His physique was superb, and his general bearing denoted a man of unflinching and simple courage. A more kindly and genial creature never lived. He was given a great sense of humour, and his bronzed face was frequently lit up with smiles, which displayed his fine, white teeth. A pair of long dark moustaches and a short curly beard set off a singularly prepossessing countenance.

As for his moral qualities, it need only be said that he was as honest as daylight, generous and open-handed, but impulsive and passionate when he was aroused. When occasion arose, he could hit a man between the eyes and fell him like an ox, without greatly bothering himself about the matter. He was naturally inclined to place confidence in anybody who could tell him a plausible story, and therefore he fell an easy prey to various designing persons who wished to swindle him; and their name was legion. He had an especial gift, very rare in sailors. He was not only exceedingly well-read, but he was also a fluent and graphic writer. It was a real pleasure to read the long, descriptive, and witty letters which he so frequently

Captain Northwood

amused himself by writing to his friends, to relieve the monotony of his long sea-voyages.

Unfortunately, it never occurred to Captain Northwood to write a book about his extraordinary experiences and the remarkable men whom he met in the course of his existence. So far from doing anything of the kind, he was extremely reticent, even in conversation with his most intimate friends, in alluding in any way to the main events of his personal history.

Another marked feature in the character of a singularly daring and dogged man was that his ambition did not carry him beyond a certain point. He had unequalled opportunities during his career of making himself a power in Borneo, but he flung them aside as being beneath his consideration. But Northwood was essentially a "lucky man." As long as he trusted to his own inspiration and rejected the advice of outsiders, his success was extraordinary.

His wife was a very pretty and charming young woman, wholly devoted to her husband. Apparently of no great strength of character, she abundantly proved in the hour of danger that her courage ran as high as that of her husband. She was a daring and accomplished horsewoman. The gentleness and charity of Mrs. Northwood's disposition made her liked wherever she went.

Captain Northwood had never been anywhere nearer to Singapore than Batavia, but yet he was attracted thither by the reports of the wonderful success of the colony founded by Sir Stamford Raffles—a port where trade was free from the shadow of a Custom House, and where all could go and come as they pleased. So Northwood decided to sail for Singapore.

In due course the *Wild Irish Girl* dropped her anchor in the Singapore roads, and it was not long before her captain saw that he had a future before him. Trade was booming, tonnage was scarce, and the conditions were such that any man possessing capacity and energy had every chance

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of making a fortune more or less rapidly. Sir Stamford Raffles was wise in his generation when he made Singapore a free port. It is a mere truism to repeat that Free Trade made the success of Singapore. What is equally simple of comprehension is that conditions which suited admirably fifty years ago are producing disastrous results to-day.

Fifty years ago Great Britain had practically a monopoly of the manufacturing and shipping interests of the world. This has since been shattered to pieces by mighty commercial forces which were yet unborn in the days of Raffles. It is within recent years that Germany, the United States, and Japan have suddenly developed with commercial and political portents adverse to British interests.

Just as Sir James Brooke was the first to inaugurate a stable government in Sarawak, Captain Northwood, in his humbler sphere, was the pioneer of British commerce on regular lines with the Borneo ports north of Sarawak. He devoted his life successfully to an arduous task, the end of which it was fortunate for him that he could not foresee. He was spared the knowledge that the day would come when his son would be compelled by sheer force of circumstances to sell his ships and his trade to the Germans.

When he arrived at Singapore, Captain Northwood had offers made to him by Germans (who even then were pushing their way into Siam) to trade between Singapore and Bangkok, on terms that assured him handsome profits. But he would have nothing to do with their proposals. Characteristically he preferred to take up the difficult and perilous Borneo trade entirely on his own account. This masterful man chose to be his own master. The *Wild Irish Girl* was refitted, and with her full complement of officers and a large native crew, was put on the run between Singapore, Labuan, and Brunei. Freights were high and expenses small, so that in spite of all sorts of difficulties Captain Northwood made the *Wild Irish Girl* pay hand-



SINGAPORE IN 1865.

Captain Northwood

somely. His sole competitor at the time was a Captain Brown, who sailed a fine ship called the *Black Diamond*. It was a case of hammer and tongs between the two vessels, but Northwood was a keener sailor and a better diplomatist than Brown. The *Wild Irish Girl* made faster passages than the *Black Diamond*. The Sultan of Brunei took especial notice of Captain Northwood, and before long trusted in him as he trusted no other man.

A British gunboat arrived at Labuan one day to inquire into piracies and various outrages in which one of the Sultan's brothers was concerned. Northwood knew all the facts of the case, and had warned the Sultan that his brother had better mend his ways, and that forays into the British colony of Labuan would result in certain disaster. Labuan, however, offered too many temptations, and the incursions into British territory continued, until the advent of the usual British gunboat.

The commander of H.M.S. *Bulldog* found the *Wild Irish Girl* in Labuan harbour, sent for Captain Northwood, and requisitioned his services to pilot the gunboat up the Brunei River, rendered dangerous to navigation by sunken vessels and stone barriers placed there by the Brunei sultans so as to compel vessels entering the river to come right under the guns of the battery on Pulo Chermin. Northwood gladly undertook the duty demanded of him, and, piloting H.M.S. *Bulldog* up the Brunei River, anchored the little man-of-war at a convenient distance for the bombardment of the Sultan's palace and the town of Brunei.

The Sultan had already had some experience of the folly of fighting British warships, and not a shot was fired as the *Bulldog* passed deliberately under the muzzles of his battery. Armed boats from the gunboat were pulling for the Sultan's palace almost as soon as the ship was anchored, Northwood accompanying the commander as interpreter.

The Sultan received his unwelcome visitors with the usual

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ceremony and with much dignity, but the commander of H.M.S. *Bulldog* was a business-like person with but little sense of the picturesque, it would appear, and Northwood was bidden to hasten matters. It was his unpleasing task to tell his Highness that his brother's crimes must now be expiated, and that the only punishment for piracy was death. Possibly no one but Northwood could have persuaded the Sultan that it was useless to attempt any delay at such a crisis. Finally it was decided that the execution of the royal pirate should take place the next morning.

When daylight broke, it was seen that one of the Sultan's largest war-prahus had been moored between the *Bulldog* and the Sultan's palace, and that a large platform had been erected on the deck of the prahu.

Once more the *Bulldog's* boats were in the water and pulling off to the scene of the execution, but this time without Captain Northwood. The British commander urged him to accompany the expedition, but Northwood pleaded that the scene must necessarily be a horrid one, and that it was no business of his. He had discharged a dangerous and unpleasant duty, there was nothing further to be asked of him; and he positively declined to be present at the execution. The British boats, having arrived alongside the prahu, a good-looking native, dressed in the royal yellow of Brunei, was led to the platform, and placed in a kneeling position on the scaffold: a bowstring was passed round his neck by two of the Sultan's executioners, and the next instant he was choking in his death-struggle. After having satisfied themselves that the sentence of death had really been carried into effect, the commander and officers of the *Bulldog* returned to their ship. Captain Northwood piloted the gunboat safely back to Labuan, and his task was completed.

But was the man in the yellow robes really the Sultan's brother? Only Northwood could have identified him, and he chose to absent himself from the scene of the execution.

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Be that as it may, the salutary lesson inflicted achieved the intended result. From the day of the execution the raids on Labuan ceased. The Sultan's guilty brother may have sent an innocent man to suffer in his place, but he was never seen again in Brunei. Perchance he may have got into the interior by the rivers, or to some more distant destination, such as the islands of Paláwan or Sulu.

Not a word ever passed between the Sultan and Captain Northwood about the execution. Although the Sultan had small reason to thank him for piloting the British gun-boat up the Brunei River, or for putting on the pressure which enabled the whole affair to be settled in twenty-four hours, apparently Northwood's absence from the execution had a great effect. He became a greater favourite at the palace than ever.

Brunei at this period of its history was a much more important place than it is to-day. The Sultan Abdul Mumein reigned over territories which have since been taken from him by diplomacy or by force. The trade of Brunei was valuable, and was chiefly managed by a Chinese community, whose acknowledged representative, the "Capitan China," was always in close touch with the Sultan.

By this time Captain Northwood had run the *Black Diamond* off the coast, and had a monopoly of the sea-trade. He found it necessary in consequence to replace the *Wild Irish Girl* by a larger brig, the *Lizzie Webber*, to be succeeded in her turn by a very handsome and beautifully appointed barque called the *Don Pedro*. While the *Don Pedro* was being refitted at Singapore, the captain started for a final cruise in the *Lizzie Webber*. Leaving Singapore with a full cargo, the vessel arrived at Brunei after a fine passage and an uneventful voyage. The Brunei River was crowded with native craft from Mindanao, Sulu, and many another distant island. The *nakodahs* (captains) of these native craft frequently paid friendly visits on board the *Lizzie Webber*, and were always cordially received by Northwood, who often purchased their cargoes of produce.

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There was a certain native captain who came on board repeatedly, under the pretext of doing a trade, which somehow never came to actual business. Northwood's chief native officer, a Javanese Malay named Cassim, got suspicious of this particular visitor, Si Rahman, whom he declared to be an Illanun. (The Illanuns were at that time the fiercest pirates known in these waters.) Northwood, although he noticed that his Illanun friend was especially curious about the armament of the *Lizzie Webber*, and her battery of twelve-pounders, thought nothing of Cassim's warnings.

This Cassim proved to be a faithful and lifelong friend to Captain Northwood, and one who served him literally to the day of his death. His fidelity was put to a severe test when Northwood was compelled to put steamers on the Borneo run, instead of the fine old sailing ships. Whether master or man was more disgusted at the inevitable change, it is hard to say; but they both adapted themselves from sail to steam, and stuck to each other through thick and thin.

Cassim understood native ways even better than his master, and grew more and more suspicious of the Illanun chief. The report had got about that Captain Northwood was taking a large sum of money to Singapore, as indeed happened to be the case. The *Lizzie Webber* dropped down the river and got across to Labuan, where she completed her cargo, and also took on board a Mr. Meldrum, one of Northwood's friends, as his only passenger that trip. The brig sailed one fine afternoon, with a light and fitful breeze. During the night the current set her over towards the Brunei coast. At daylight, as she slowly rounded a point, her captain saw, to his horror, a fleet of eight Illanun vessels lying in wait for him in a little bay. The wind died away altogether and left the brig without so much as steerage-way on her.

All was hurry and bustle on board the *Lizzie Webber*. The men beat to quarters, the guns were run out, and

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rifles and cutlasses served to the crew. Captain Northwood went below for a few moments, during which he handed his wife a revolver, with strict injunctions to keep in her cabin during the fight, and to shoot her son and herself if the pirates carried the ship. This son was little John Dillon Northwood, born in Singapore some four years before.

Northwood then took up his post on the quarter-deck while events developed rapidly. The pirate squadron came sweeping down on their prey, each prahu pulling some forty oars or more at a great rate. The pirates were several hundreds strong, and had they gone straight to work, the fate of the *Lizzie Webber* would have been settled within the next half hour. That, fortunately, is not the native way of doing things. The pirate vessels pulled right round the motionless brig and then the leading prahu swept towards her until both vessels were within easy hail of each other. An exposed platform had been erected right amidships of the pirate vessel, on which stood, conspicuous in a scarlet jacket, Si Rahman himself. The pirate chief hailed Northwood by name and explained that he had come as a friend and, being short of tobacco, proposed to come on board the *Lizzie Webber* to purchase a supply of it. To this Northwood's reply was that he knew pirates when he saw them, and that if the vessels which surrounded him did not sheer off, he would open fire on them at once. The Illanun adjured Northwood to give up his ship without a useless struggle, especially as he himself wore a magic charm which rendered him invulnerable to shot or steel.

Cassim, on the main-deck, was anxiously watching his master's movements, and thinking that a certain wave of the hand gave him liberty to do so, immediately fired the gun of which he was in charge at the pirate prahu, and thus commenced the action on his own responsibility, much to the anger of Mr. Simpson, the chief officer.

The *Lizzie Webber* carried a battery of six twelve-

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pounders, and Northwood, having purchased some time previously a few cases of American muskets from a Yankee captain whom he had met at sea, had half a dozen muskets for every sailor on board. These had all been carefully loaded before the fighting commenced. Thus the *Lizzie Webber's* crew had only to throw down an empty musket to pick up a loaded one, and kept up a rapid fire which greatly disconcerted the pirates. The brig, like other ships on that coast, carried a very large crew to work her cargo as well as to sail her. Her twelve-pounders were each loaded with a round shot and a canvas bag of bullets rammed home on top of it, which made a very effective charge at short ranges.

From the moment that Cassim fired the first shot, the *Lizzie Webber* kept up a hot fire with her guns and musketry, while the pirates, who mounted a number of light guns, replied vigorously. Their prahus were strengthened by breastworks of Borneo ironwood strong enough to withstand the impact of a round shot.

The roar of the guns and the constant rattle of the musketry made a terrific din, above which rose the yells of the pirates. Mr. Simpson was carried below badly wounded, with three native sailors in the same condition, within a few minutes after the action commenced. In the absence of any surgeon, Mrs. Northwood had to attend as best she could to the wounded. Poor lady! she had trouble enough on her hands. Her son Johnnie, so far from being frightened by the din of battle, made frantic attempts to escape to the upper deck to see what "papa was doing." He had finally to be carried off by his mother, kicking and screaming with rage, to be locked up in a spare cabin.

Mrs. Northwood's presence of mind saved a disaster, which would have put any further resistance out of the question. The *Lizzie Webber's* magazine was right aft, and was got at through a scuttle in a store-room. As powder was running short for the guns, Mr. Jenkins, the

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second mate, sent a couple of native sailors to bring up some kegs for the magazine. With the usual thoughtlessness of Malays, the sailors were actually going into the magazine with a naked light, when Mrs. Northwood rushed in time to seize the flaring lamp and throw it through an open port-hole into the sea. She then went into the magazine herself to see the powder handed up, and found the whole floor of the place covered thickly with loose gunpowder. In those stirring days a captain's wife needed to have her wits about her!

In the meantime Captain Northwood himself was fighting his ship for all he was worth. His great object was to bring down Si Rahman, who exhibited the most extraordinary daring—possessed as he was of the idea that his magic charm would preserve him from all danger. There he stood on his platform, like a scarlet demon, directing the attack, and constantly exposed to a rattling fire, and somehow nothing could touch him. “For goodness sake, Meldrum, do bowl over that ruffian in the scarlet dress!” roared Northwood. Meldrum quietly loaded a new American rifle of which he was very proud, though it would be considered a very queer weapon nowadays. The “rifling” consisted of two broad straight grooves right down the barrel without the slightest twist. Into these grooves there then fitted a “belted bullet,” wrapped in a leather patch to prevent windage. In the massive stock of the rifle was a solid brass flap, operated by a spring, which revealed two cavities, in which the leather patches and percussion-caps were kept. Such was the rifle of those early days, the progenitor of the modern small-bore with a tremendous twist in its rifling.

Meldrum methodically loaded his pet rifle and systematically potted at the scarlet Si Rahman—without the slightest effect. Northwood himself fired a few shots at him from his own favourite American smooth-bore carbine with the same result. From the main-deck and fore-castle scores of shots were directed at Si Rahman without hurting

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him. The man was perfectly aware of the unavailing attempts to bring him down, and openly rejoiced in the strength of his magic charm. It really seemed as if the charm was working to some purpose. Cassim, especially, tried the united effects of round shot and bags of bullets on his hated enemy, but while they took full effect on the crew of the prahu, nothing could touch the scarlet Si Rahman.

After three hours of desperate struggle there came a lull. At a signal from Si Rahman all firing from the pirate squadron ceased, and they pulled away from the *Lizzie Webber*. For a brief moment, Captain Northwood hoped that they had enough of it, and that the attack was definitely repulsed. Nevertheless, he went round his decks, saw that the heated twelve-pounders were sponged out and ready for further service, and that all the small arms were reloaded. Barely had he completed his round when he saw the pirate vessels sweeping down upon him again under the full pressure of their swift oars. Si Rahman's plan of battle was now evident. Having at first hoped to make an easy prey of the *Lizzie Webber*, when he found himself balked by the deadly firing from the brig, he had tried to wear down Northwood's resistance by picking off his men, and exhausting his ammunition. Now, disappointed with the results of his tactics, he decided to do what he should have done some hours before, and, throwing his hundreds of men on the deck of the *Lizzie Webber*, leave cold steel to do the rest. The eight prahus made a dash for the starboard side of the brig, thus leaving her port battery idle.

Northwood saw the coming onrush with the blackest despair. How could he hope with his scanty crew to withstand the onslaught of some hundreds of desperate Illanun pirates? He had half a mind to throw up the sponge, to rush below, and after despatching his wife and child to blow up the magazine. However, the fighting instinct is hard to quell in such a man, and for another

Captain Northwood

minute he watched the occasional shots from his star-board guns flying harmlessly over the approaching prahus, which lay so low in the water that it was impossible to depress the muzzles of the *Lizzie Webber's* guns sufficiently to hit them. Si Rahman's own prahu, which was by far the best manned of the pirate fleet, drew rapidly ahead of the rest, and was almost alongside the brig when Northwood saw Cassim about to fire his twelve-pounder, with a result which must be necessarily harmless. Leaping down to the main-deck, Northwood restrained the Malay's hand and shouted: "Don't fire over the prahu! Train the gun straight on the platform and kill Sidi Rahman!" Cassim showed that he had driven the wedge beneath the gun's breech as far as it would go and that he could depress the gun's muzzle no further. Looking round with a hunted desperation in his eyes, Northwood happened to see a spare spar lying on the deck. Suddenly bending down he put forth the whole of his great strength, and lifting the gun-carriage bodily, he got Cassim and another sailor to roll the spar beneath it. Then taking a hasty look along the sights he fired the gun. Before the smoke had cleared away, dire yells arose from the pirate prahu, while shouts of joy rang along the decks of the *Lizzie Webber*. What Captain Northwood saw when he looked over his bulwarks was a pile of wreckage in place of the famous platform on which Sidi Rahman had so recklessly displayed his scarlet coat. As for Sidi Rahman himself, a scarlet patch in the water swirling around the sinking prahu sufficiently accounted for the fiery Illanun chief. His magic charm had failed him at the critical moment.

The other pirate vessels rescued as many as they could from the sinking boat, under a hot fire from the *Lizzie Webber*, and then pulled away from her. And now, a gentle breeze at last springing up, the *Lizzie Webber* began to get way on her. Captain Northwood thought once more that he had escaped from the toils of his enemies. Still he availed himself of this respite to put his ship

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in fighting trim. Guns and small arms were all loaded, and the tired crew given their first meal during this terrible day.

But the pirate fleet still hung round the brig, their boats could still pull much faster than she could sail, and it was clear that the foe was only waiting for darkness to deliver his final attack. It was a grim and hopeless prospect. However, the breeze was freshening all the time, and as the *Lizzie Webber* began to slip through the water, the pirates, thirsting for revenge as well as plunder, closed on her under the rays of an evening sun.

Once more the firing raged hotly on both sides, when suddenly in the midst of the fighting Mrs. Northwood appeared on the quarter-deck to tell her husband that there were only six more kegs of powder left in the magazine. It was not a message she could trust to other lips than her own. "Very well!" said Northwood. "Send up the six kegs and leave the rest to me. Obey my orders and go to your cabin."

The pirates were rapidly approaching the *Lizzie Webber*. The six kegs of powder would just enable her guns to fire one round apiece, with something to spare for the muskets. The situation this time seemed perfectly desperate. Northwood recalled the lines :

And in our hearts a dread despair
Too deep for words, too dark for prayer !

But an inspiration came at the right moment. Suddenly he altered his tactics, and instead of flying from his pursuers, he attacked them. Down went his helm, he spilled his sails, and before the pirates could comprehend his new move, he was sailing through their fleet, firing his last broadside. One of the prahus was caught at a disadvantage. Springing to the wheel, Northwood altered the *Lizzie Webber's* course by a few points. Next minute there was a tremendous crash as the keel of the brig rode over the wreck of the prahu. Some of the pirates were

Captain Northwood

shot as they swam in the water. Others, with the usual agility of natives, actually managed to climb up the ship's chains in an endeavour to reach the deck, but were promptly cut down. Then came the sudden darkness of the tropics, and in its welcome obscurity the *Lizzie Webber's* sails filled and bore her into safety. The Illanun pirates had sustained a bloody defeat in an attack which lasted eight mortal hours on a mere brig manned by three white men and some forty natives.

This affair of the *Lizzie Webber* had a very salutary effect. Pirates conceived a horror of the very name of Northwood and carefully refrained from molesting him again. Indeed, they got something of a dislike against attacking British ships in general after the death of Si Rahman and the closing catastrophe which marked the fight. That Si Rahman's magic charm should have failed when victory was smiling on him must have impressed the superstitious Illanuns much more deeply than Europeans would think probable.

In due course the *Lizzie Webber* reached Singapore, where her arrival made some sensation. Singapore merchants were deeply interested in the suppression of piracy in those days, and a few of them presented Northwood with a piece of plate, while a good many people came off to see the brig out of curiosity. Amongst others was that gallant officer, Major Browning. The major intended sailing to Labuan in the *Lizzie Webber* to inspect the batteries of the island, but on visiting the brig, he was so horrified at Captain Northwood's unprofessional conduct in rolling a spare spar under a gun-carriage that he said he would be eternally condemned if he sailed in the same ship with such a fellow. Major Browning kept his word and ultimately reached Labuan in a gunboat.

CHAPTER II

LABUAN IN THE OLDEN DAYS

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD bought the *Don Pedro* as a mere speculation. To all appearance a finer ship never floated; but the barque had a bad character. Nothing could make her sail; her passages were the longest on record, and in the hands of successive masters she had proved to be a regular "pig" of a ship, capable of doing anything but making a fast run from port to port. Now, in the Borneo trade a fast sailer was essential. The *Don Pedro* was going absurdly cheap, it was true, but then the handsome barque, more than twice the size of the *Lizzie Webber*, would be dear at a gift, if she sailed like a haystack.

"Why the deuce can't the *Don Pedro* sail?" anxiously thought Northwood. Anyhow, he bought the handsome sluggard for a mere song, much less than he got for the fast-sailing *Lizzie Webber*, though she was not in the pink of condition after her eight hours' fight with the Illanun pirates. Having bought the *Don Pedro*, Northwood seriously tackled the problem before him. He spent many an hour figuring out a new sail plan for his new ship, and finally made up his mind that amongst other things the foremast was too near the mainmast. He went to the expense of having the foremast taken out and stepped a little distance forward—not more than three or four feet. It seems a trifle, but it made all the difference. With altered spars and a new set of sails made to her captain's own plans, the *Don Pedro* looked a different ship. When Northwood took her out for a trial spin after he had made all his alterations, he found to his delight that

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she sailed like a witch, and was as handy as a top. The man who sold the *Don Pedro* for a song began to say harsh things about various wooden-headed skippers in his employ, who had unanimously certified that the ship was fit only to be broken up, but he readily recognized that Northwood had paid his money, had run his risks, and was fully entitled to the reward of his superior science as a sailor.

The *Don Pedro* was a lucky ship for Northwood from the very start. On her maiden voyage for Labuan and Brunei, she loaded a full cargo and, moreover, Northwood was paid a handsome sum to carry a detachment of Indian troops for Labuan. His cabins were taken at excellent rates by the officers and their wives, and Major Barclay, the officer in command of the detachment, proved to be a nice genial fellow.

The *Don Pedro* was a very comfortable and even a luxurious ship. There was a fine piano in her spacious saloon, and the after-cabins were large and airy. They were fitted up most comfortably, and had actual large bedsteads in them, instead of the miserable bunks of the modern mail steamer. Northwood kept an excellent table, and possessed an agreeable manner, which did much to keep his passengers happy and amused during a long voyage. The first trip of the *Don Pedro* commenced under the best of circumstances, and Northwood, after going over his supercargo's freight-list, found that he should, with average luck, clear the cost of his ship in three or four voyages.

The *Don Pedro* made a very fine run to Labuan. The time had passed away most agreeably for everybody on board. Reading, chess, whist, music, and chatting and lounging about in long chairs, with an occasional brandy and soda and a Manila cheroot, sufficed to fill up spare hours in various ways for various tastes. Major Barclay and Captain Northwood had a real regard and liking for one another before the voyage was ended, while their wives swore eternal friendship after the manner of women.

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The *Don Pedro* made fast at the rambling, rickety wharf in Labuan harbour, to which Northwood always brought his ship, and landed his passengers, who were more than half sorry to finish such a pleasant cruise.

Labuan harbour consists of a splendid bay for commercial purposes. It possesses a very wide expanse of deep, tranquil water, so that in places a ship can anchor at a very short distance from the shore. Nature has very kindly placed a group of small islands off the entrance to the harbour, which act as natural breakwaters. The island itself is on a fine trade-route; and, as a beautiful harbour with a coal-field within ten miles of it is a thing rarely to be found, it undoubtedly has its attractions. Of natural beauties Labuan has very few, but considering the island from a purely business point of view, there is perhaps no other harbour in the whole Far East offering so many facilities for the development of a mercantile port of the first order. It seems regrettable, therefore, that Labuan, after an existence of so many years, should still remain a comparatively obscure and little frequented island.

At the time when Captain Northwood sailed the *Don Pedro* into harbour, Labuan had reached the height of a somewhat artificial prosperity. A native regiment, and a battery or two of artillery, formed the garrison, and gave a considerable amount of business and animation to the place. Then the Scottish Oriental Coal Company had taken the mines in hand on a grand scale. The conveniences offered by Labuan brought a great deal of trade from the mainland and the other islands.

Rajah Brooke's successful expeditions against the Seribas and Sekarang pirates had created a sense of security along the Borneo coast for many a hundred miles beyond the Sarawak territory. All seemed to be progressing favourably, and with ordinary good fortune the place should have become a colony of great importance and one of our most valued possessions in the Far East.

At this period of our story Labuan was a Crown Colony,

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under the rule of Mr. John Pope Hennessey, fated to be better known in various parts of the world as Sir John Pope Hennessey, G.C.M.G., etc., etc., etc. Northwood took a great interest in Pope Hennessey, whom, by the way, he used to call "The Pope," for short. John Pope Hennessey was a very extraordinary man, who had a long and picturesque public career. This, according to Northwood, he commenced as a very young man, representing an Irish constituency in the House of Commons. Gifted with much ability and possessing an inordinate flow of speech, he speedily became a rankling thorn in the side of the Government of the day. Pope Hennessey was not only "agin the Government," to which he had sworn allegiance, but against any kind of government anywhere. To suit his ends, he espoused the cause of Polish Freedom in the House to such an extent that he probably encouraged certain Polish patriots to get themselves killed in the foolish belief that Great Britain would rise in arms to deliver them from the Oppressor! A number of Polish patriots, wending their way to the end of all things earthly, managed in the brief span of life yet accorded to them to subscribe in their own gallant and generous way to present a massive silver cup to their Irish saviour, into which was let a vastly interesting collection of gold coins, displaying the heads of ancient Polish kings. From a certain point of view, the cup was priceless, but, according to Northwood, Pope Hennessey's necessities at the moment were such that he sold it for what it would fetch.

A phenomenon of much import to unhappy Labuan occurred at this time. The penniless, eloquent and horribly troublesome member for some remote Irish constituency was suddenly offered a post in the very Far East. The appointment in question was that of Governor of Labuan, worth in hard cash some two thousand pounds per annum, what with pay and allowances. The British Government put up the job, and Mr. Pope Hennessey took it. Wherever Pope Hennessey went he wrought mischief to British

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interests. The British Government gave him a handle to his name and one or more decorations, plus salaries rising to five thousand pounds; but, to do him justice, Pope Hennessey remained to his last official moment the man who was "agin the Government" and took its pay. In the course of his career he set the blacks against the whites in the West Indies, the French element against the British element in the Mauritius, and, finally, he tried to make some trouble in Hong-Kong. But perhaps Pope Hennessey did his deadliest work in Labuan.

The budding colony wanted all the encouragement it could get. It was not yet strong enough to stand a drastic system of taxation. As there were no racial hatreds handy, Pope Hennessey had a good look at Labuan, and declared that "the place must pay its way." That is to say, he saddled it with the cost of the garrison and put taxes on everything that could be taxed, so that the life was practically choked out of the little island. In those days colonial governors were not hooked on to a telegraph cable, and could do a vast deal in carrying out any particular policy before the Colonial Office could have any say in the matter.

The Coal Company, which was to have been the glory of the island, was merely spending money in various unprofitable directions. There were frequent changes in the management, and each manager's first care appeared to be to reverse his predecessor's policy, and, above all, to order out a new cargo of machinery. One genius got out a very expensive plant for distilling shale-oil. This was landed on the beach and never got any further. The next manager said that there was shale in the island, but that it would be necessary to wait at least a million years before anybody could get any oil out of it, as it was quite a new formation of shale, and so it appears the other man's geology was all wrong. As much of the oil-plant as the *Don Pedro* could load without shutting out too much of other people's cargo was shipped to Singapore, where the

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company's agents sold it for considerably less than the freight which they paid to Northwood for bringing it back to Singapore. Meanwhile, the manager devoted his energies to building an expensive wharf in the wrong place.

During all this time Northwood was making money fast, and investing his profits in promoting his direct interests. He bought up house property in Labuan to such an extent that in the end practically the whole of the little town belonged to him. Again, if a Chinaman who was in any way a decent sort of fellow wanted money to open a sago-flour factory, or to buy jungle produce, Northwood was always ready to advance him money, at what was then the phenomenally cheap rate of twelve per cent. per annum, always provided that the borrower signed a three-years' contract to confine his freights solely to Northwood's ships. He, on his side, guaranteed to find sufficient tonnage for all requirements.

Northwood had no sort of material guarantee for the large sums he thus advanced to open up the Borneo trade, but he was a shrewd man, who made but few mistakes, and his personal popularity was of the greatest assistance to him. Almost everybody, whether white, yellow, or brown, liked the captain. The Chinese and natives had the most absolute trust in him.

Northwood's sagacious and far-sighted policy stood him in good stead in the hour of stress. The Scottish Oriental Coal Company, which did things on a great scale, sent out a fleet of four fine steamers to carry the coals from the Labuan mines to Singapore, and other ports in the Far East. Unluckily for Northwood and all concerned, there were hardly any coals to be exported from Labuan; something, as usual, had gone wrong with the mines, and the output was very small indeed. In these unfortunate circumstances the local manager decided to employ his steamers as freighters, and incidentally to break up Northwood's trade. To his vast amazement, he found that the thing

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could not be done. The coal company's steamers were built for carrying coal, and were quite unsuited for the very mixed cargoes from the Borneo coast. Nor had they any accommodation for either cabin or deck passengers. Nobody would have anything to do with the company's steamers, and it was only then that it came to light what a tremendous grip Northwood had got of the trade. The shippers either could not or would not ship by the steamers. Finally, in despair, the manager sent for Northwood and offered him terms. He pointed out to the sailing ship captain that with "a rotten wooden barque" he had no chance against four steamers owned by a wealthy company. The manager offered Northwood a very handsome salary to run the company's steamers and the freight trade on their behalf, subject, of course, to his becoming their paid servant, and ceasing all operations on his account. The offer was tempting enough, but Northwood would have none of it.

The *Don Pedro* sailed for Singapore loaded as deep as it was safe to load the ship. There was not a single cabin to let, and her decks simply swarmed with native passengers. The company's steamer left at the same time for Singapore, with a few hundred tons of surface-coal dug up in a hurry. Their engineer in charge of the pumps, having "gone Fantee" with a case of brandy and a couple of native women, had left the main-shaft to fill up with water. The engineer in charge of the railway line was down with Labuan fever, and so things went from bad to worse, while a distracted manager wondered at Northwood's folly in rushing to his own ruin.

On arriving at Singapore Northwood looked about for a larger vessel than the *Don Pedro*, and finally bought for a handsome price the *Samson*, a beautiful full-rigged ship, in every way suited for his trade. He did not like the idea of parting with the *Don Pedro*, so he decided to put the barque on the Saigon trade, under the command of his chief officer, Simpson, who had been badly wounded during

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the *Lizzie Webber* affair. Captain Simpson was very grateful to Northwood for his promotion, but, unfortunately, did not live very long to enjoy it.

The *Samson* proved to be a very successful and popular ship. The only thing which bothered Northwood was the dead calms which are to be encountered in those waters, and which sometimes last for a long time. On some voyages he had known what it was to take six weeks to drift the eight hundred miles which separate Labuan from Singapore, whereas with a fair wind he would run the distance in the same number of days.

One fine evening the *Samson* was lying alongside the wharf at Labuan, quite ready for sea, and was to sail at daybreak the following morning. Captain Northwood was giving a farewell bachelor dinner on board. Captain Barkspur and a couple of the officers from H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* were amongst the guests. Then there were also present, Major Barclay and two of his officers, while Dr. McPhun and three or four civilians made up the party. Northwood made it an iron rule to be a strict teetotaller at sea, but once he was in port he used to enjoy his bottle of wine as much as any man. The dinners given on board of the *Samson* were always very excellent, but those were days when gentlemen sometimes drank just a little too much wine. When poor Dr. McPhun thought it about time to return to the bosom of his family, he saw two gangways instead of one, and choosing the imaginary instead of the wooden one, fell incontinently into the sea with a loud splash.

Major Barclay looked over the side and said, philosophically enough: "The old Doctor has gone overboard, but he's much too fat to sink. He's floatin' about all right!"

Northwood, in his turn, had a look at the Doctor, and exclaimed in horrified tones: "*But he's floating wrong side up!*"

He was a very strong and expert swimmer, so, kicking off

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his shoes he went overboard to the rescue. Without too much effort the half-drowned doctor was got on board, carefully dried, and put to bed until next morning. Northwood having got into a fresh set of white ducks, came on deck again, and sat down to have a final chat with his other guests.

Now H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* was a surveying-ship, and Captain Barkspur was indebted to Northwood for much valuable assistance in making his new chart of Borneo waters. In any event, Barkspur had a great liking for the hospitable and genial skipper of the *Samson*, and mentioning that the *Sharpshooter* was about to steam for Singapore, asked if he could take any letters for his host.

"Well," said Northwood, "I wish you would take me with you instead!"

"What! take you as a passenger?"

"No, not quite that; but it's nothing but dead calms all round just now; the sea is just like a sheet of glass. Goodness knows when the *Samson* will ever get to Singapore! Now, if you would only give my ship a friendly tow across, it would mean a small fortune for me!"

Barkspur said the thing was absurd; then somehow the idea seemed less ridiculous than at first, and he finally consented to the proposal. Shortly after this the festive gathering broke up, and Northwood's guests reached their respective destinations without any further incident.

Very early next morning Captain Barkspur was awakened from his brief slumbers by an unusual trampling and bustle overhead. Then he realized that he was suffering from what is vulgarly known in the Far East as "a stiff head." The captain of H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* sorrowfully admitted to himself that this was the result of topping off a quantity of champagne with a few brandies and sodas. Too many cheroots also, beyond a doubt! Meanwhile, he rang a bell and sent a marine on deck to find out the cause of the unseemly noises overhead, and to bid them to cease instantly.

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The marine returned to say that it was only Captain Northwood bending his cables. The horrified Barkspur simply jumped into a uniform and hastened on deck, where he found Northwood, looking as fresh as paint, contemplating with a beatific smile a couple of fine Manila hawsers, artistically made fast to the *Sharpshooter's* bits.

"What's the meaning of all this?" roared Barkspur.

"Well!" calmly responded Northwood, "Mr. Shovells, your chief engineer, said you might be getting under way very shortly, so I thought I would get everything ready in good time for the tow. . . ."

"Tow!!!"

"Why, yes! You're going to tow the *Samson* to Singapore, aren't you? At least, you promised to do so last night. I say, Simpson, I think you heard Captain Barkspur say he would do so!"

Lieutenant Simpson, one of Northwood's guests at his dinner, had been an amazed listener to the conversation about towing the *Samson*. He turned rather red in the face, and said that he believed that Captain Northwood was stating facts correctly.

"Then that settles the matter," quoth Northwood.

Barkspur promptly retorted that he wanted certain condemned Manila hawsers taken off his quarter-deck at once, as he intended to leave for Singapore without any further delay.

"Do you mean to say that you actually think that I am going to tow that outrageous old East Indiaman of yours all the way to Singapore?" he asked.

Here Barkspur looked angrily at the towering masts and spars of the *Samson* just astern of him. Northwood simply expressed his undying confidence in Captain Barkspur's word, and taking out a spotless white handkerchief, blew some imaginary tears down his nose.

"This comes of dining with a merchant skipper," growled Barkspur. "I've got a head on me like a toyshop, and

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find I'm expected to tow a monstrous wind-jammer from here to Jerusalem!"

"If you will invite me to your cabin, I daresay I can relieve you of that little headache in a brace of shakes, and we can talk over other things afterwards."

So the two captains went below, and once they were comfortably seated in Barkspur's cabin, it turned out that Northwood's prescription was "a hair of the dog," in other words, just a little champagne with a few drops of Angostura bitters in it. So a "small bottle" with the attendant Angostura was put on the table, and when the champagne was finished, Barkspur's headache had somehow disappeared, whilst Northwood feelingly observed that he had never felt better in his life.

"Mind you!" said Barkspur, as they rose from the table, "I cast you off at the Horsburgh Light. I'm not going to tow your *Samson* right into Singapore harbour. And you are not to say a word about it to anybody."

To these conditions Captain Northwood willingly consented, and forthwith went on board his ship.

A couple of hours later the good folks of Labuan were more than a little surprised to see H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* steaming at full speed out of the harbour, whilst astern of her the *Samson* strained gallantly at her tow-ropes, and glided gaily through a crystal sea, without so much as a stitch of canvas set.

Life in Labuan was very unconventional in those distant days, when all sorts of odd things used to happen without causing any great surprise to anybody. Some of the men sent out to the island on good salaries seemed to make it their object to do as little as possible in return for the money which they received; and as Labuan has an enervating climate, and is but a poor place for sport or other healthy forms of amusement, they naturally took to drinking and dissipation. A few who got ambitious, or simply could not help it, would overwork themselves and go down under the Labuan fever. The men who got

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on best were those who were moderate in their work, as in everything else. Even His Excellency the Governor, in his very fine residence standing in a beautiful park, could get bored and find time passing all too slowly.

One of the successors of Mr. Pope Hennessey, who was a very economical Governor, took to keeping cows as a hobby. As he could get as many native convicts as he required to look after his cows, it was not a costly amusement. Then he started making butter, in quantities considerably in excess of the requirements of his household. Nothing would induce His Excellency to give away any of his surplus butter while it was sweet and fresh. It was all carefully potted and stored. By and by, when the butter got so strong that either the Governor or It would have to quit the house, then would His Excellency pen a few of the polite notes which he knew so well how to write, and during the same day all the prominent citizens of Labuan were afflicted with a present of the Governor's butter. It was a painful sight to see a prominent citizen's wife writing a slavish and palpably insincere letter of thanks to His Excellency, for his "welcome and delightful gift," while her husband was standing over the gardener to see that he dug a certain hole deep enough. As for the Governor, he would go through his little pile of grateful and appreciative letters with much gratification, and then go ahead making some more butter.

Another Governor, Mr. Hugh Low, took up the study of fruit and flowers. In due course he produced what was probably the most delicious fruit in the world, the Labuan pomelo, the result of grafting oranges on pomelo trees. For fragrance, flavour and juiciness, the Labuan pomelo was without its equal. When this fruit was in season, Northwood never sailed from Labuan without a good supply of pomeloes, which were the delight of his friends in Singapore. As Resident of Perak, in later years, Sir Hugh Low rose to great distinction, but the island of

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Labuan never appeared to give him the scope necessary for his abilities.

Indeed, a horrid blight settled on the unfortunate colony and its affairs. The great Coal Company, after an extravagant expenditure of capital, went into liquidation. Its steamers were transferred to the China coast, and formed into a separate concern, which as the Scottish Oriental Steam Navigation Company had a long and, presumably, a fairly prosperous career, with a considerable increase in the number of its steamers. But in the end the Germans bought up the whole fleet and transferred it to their own flag.

Perhaps one of the most striking features in the story of the Labuan trade is that, while the neighbouring State of Sarawak, some four hundred miles away from Labuan, had a regular and efficient steamship service between Kuching and Singapore ever since 1856, it was nearly twenty years later before Captain Northwood put his first steamer on the line between Singapore, Labuan and Brunei. At this day Sarawak is progressive and prosperous, while Labuan, in spite of its unequalled advantages, is by no means appreciated at its real value.

CHAPTER III

SINGAPORE IN THE OLDEN DAYS

AS agreed, H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* cast off the *Samson* when the two vessels had reached the Horsburgh Lighthouse, and the same afternoon Captain Barkspur was at his moorings at the man-of-war anchorage of Singapore harbour. The *Samson* drifted in next morning, and Northwood dropped his anchor in the roads and went ashore to look after his affairs. In due course he worked round to McAlister's, the ship-chandler's, the rendezvous of all the skippers in the port, where they would smoke and swap yarns about themselves and their ships, all to the ultimate benefit of the worthy McAlister, with whom they ran up long bills at very tall prices.

Somehow it got round that the *Samson* had made a wonderful passage from Labuan, apparently in a dead calm. The skippers rubbed their eyes, and when Northwood entered the shop, he was hailed with a shower of questions.

Captain Shelback, of the *Flying Cloud*, was the first to tackle him.

"I say, Northwood, how long d'ye say you took from Labuan to here?" he cried.

"Six days and a half, sir."

"Nonsense! Rot! D'ye think you're talking to idiots?"

"Well," intervened Captain Speker, of the *Spindrift*, "I've just come from the Harbour Master's office and seen the *Samson's* papers, and she's sailed the voyage all right in a little over six days."

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Shelback was completely taken aback, and after a while asked how the devil he did it?

"By good navigation, my dear sir, just good navigation!" replied Northwood in a careless tone as he left the shop to avoid any more awkward questions.

He never said a word about his passage himself, but in the course of a day or two the truth inevitably leaked out through other sources. Captain Shelback never liked Northwood before, but now he hated him, and held out angrily and at length about Northwood's "cheek." How the man escaped being kicked over the ship's side, instead of getting a tow from H.M.S. *Sharpshooter*, was an impenetrable mystery to the envious master of the *Flying Cloud*. The other captains said it was like Northwood's luck, and took it out of him by chaffing him unmercifully about his smart passage.

For all this Northwood cared nothing; but, happening to run across Captain Barkspur in Raffles Square, he met with the briefest recognition from the captain of H.M.S. *Sharpshooter*. With his usual sagacity Northwood recognized that he was one man to Barkspur in Labuan and quite another in Singapore, so he simply passed by with a touch of his hat. Yet it so happened that long years afterwards, Barkspur and Northwood met each other in a London club and talked over old times in Labuan with a zest which can be imagined.

The old-time merchant skipper of Singapore put on a good deal of style. For instance, there was Captain Bangs, of the *Zephyr*, who never went forth without three of his sailors in his train. One held a green-lined umbrella over his sacred head, another carried a small coil of smouldering rope in his hand, in case Captain Bangs might want to light a cigar, while yet a third was in charge of a japanned deed-box, supposed to contain papers of considerable value. Bangs and his satellites used to take up a good deal of room as they sauntered up the Battery Road; but occasionally he would take the *Zephyr* to some



THE RIVER AND TOWN OF SINGAPORE IN 1865.

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mysterious cruising-ground of his own, somewhere in Dutch Borneo, and then the population of Singapore was able to breathe freely and have some elbow-room until Bangs came back again with bags of Dutch guilders, Dutch spices, and other ill-gotten gains, to the general confusion of the traffic of Singapore.

It is now necessary to return for a while to the purely domestic affairs of the Northwoods. They lost their first-born in the waters of Melbourne harbour. In after days they had a son and a daughter, both of whom died of Labuan fever. About a year after the death of their third child, their fourth and last was born at Singapore, the boy of whom we have already heard in the story of the fight with the Illanun pirates. Christened John Dillon, after his father, this youngster was affectionately known as "Johnnie," not only to his parents, but soon to all and sundry.

Johnnie was born in a fine, handsome house in Beach Road. It is not given to everyone to know the exact moment of his birth, but Mrs. Northwood often told her son in later days that he was born on the 15th December, 1856, exactly as the morning-gun was fired from Fort Canning—that is to say, at five a.m.

While the preceding Northwood children had been fine strapping kiddies, poor little Johnnie was a weakling, who gave endless anxiety to his parents, and was only saved from a premature grave by his mother's constant care. However, Johnnie grew up to manhood. It would have been much better for his father's financial position in later life if his feeble existence had flickered out, but this is anticipating the course of history.

After the birth of Johnnie, Mrs. Northwood remained on shore a good deal, instead of constantly accompanying her husband on his voyages as hitherto. She went with him every second or third trip with Master Johnnie, but the Northwoods were terribly afraid of his being carried off by the Labuan fever. On one voyage, indeed, the

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Captain's ship was taken up the Sarawak river to Kuching, because little Johnnie's teething was giving trouble. That brave and worthy man, Bishop Macdougall, performed some such kindly office as lancing the baby's gums, whereupon the ship dropped down the river and resumed her interrupted voyage.

Johnnie, in spite of his feeble health, grew up to be a very bright and daring lad. He loved his father's ship, just as he loved the fine old rambling mansion on the Beach Road, which had formerly been the American Consulate. The house was surrounded by a great garden, full of flowering bushes and lovely trees, and there then was a charming colonnade—a playground for the youngster of which he was never tired.

Johnnie was always in trouble. His father, who had great ideas of a robust life for a young child and of the necessity of "hardening him," bought a donkey for his son. Johnnie and his donkey were, like Captain Bangs and his tail of retainers, a sore trial to the Singapore public. It was Johnnie's delight to career round the esplanade on his steed, regardless of collisions with quite important people, or bruises and contusions to himself. As for the donkey, it bore a charmed life, and never turned a hair.

If Caroline Northwood spoilt her son, it was otherwise with the lad's father, who had a sailor's ideas about "molly-coddling." His theory of education was very simple indeed. Lying and cowardice were to him scarlet sins, and he believed that if his son grew up to be truthful and manly, his feet would be set on the right road. More he did not demand of him. Johnnie was naturally a very simple and honest lad, free from the vice of lying, which is so closely allied to cowardice. But Northwood would go so far as to whip his son if he cried when he fell down and hurt himself. A few whippings taught Johnnie at a very early age the secret of suffering in silence ; and it is a valuable secret !

As the boy reached to his sixth year of age, his parents

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could no longer blink the fact that he was getting feebler and dwindling away. It was absolutely necessary to send him home. Mrs. Northwood refused point-blank to leave her husband in order to take Johnnie to England. But, she said, Matthew Small was taking his wife and family home next spring. Why should not Johnnie go with them? So next day Northwood had a talk with his friend Matthew, and he very kindly consented to take the child to England, where the Captain had made arrangements that he should be taken care of in an old friend's family until he should be ready to go to school.

John Small's store was then the one indispensable feature of life in Singapore. It seemed so refreshing to step from the heat and glare of the Square into the cool shades of John Small's spacious premises. On one side was the watch-making and jewellery department, glittering with trinkets. Behind it the book department was a great attraction. There was a large section given up to Chinese and Japanese porcelains and lacquers, and always full of pretty things. There were other departments for laces and ribbons; rifles, guns and saddles for young sportsmen; yet another for the best brands of brandy, pale ale, and various comestibles. In fact, there was always some excuse for looking in at John Small's. One met such nice people there, anyway. Nobody dreamed of paying cash for anything. Everything was put down in the bill, which was punctually sent in at the end of the month, and sometimes paid.

In those days John Small's buildings had an entrance facing the sea. The sea then rolled over where Collyer Quay and great blocks of solid buildings now stand, and John Small was able to unload cargo-boats at his own door.

Northwood kept a very large account with John Small, because so many people in Labuan commissioned him to execute their orders for them, and the *Samson* was always wanting something or other. Northwood was a particularly

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desirable customer, because he always paid for everything he bought whether it was for his own or anybody else's account. In a secluded corner of John Small's, Northwood had a big safe, which generally contained very considerable sums of money, and when Small's wanted a settlement they had merely to suggest a visit to the safe and the thing was done.

Originally the firm had been Bannerjee, Small and Co., the Parsee finding the money, and the Englishman the ability and energy to work the business. Bannerjee was a very agreeable kind of Parsee, who kept open house and spent a great deal of money in various ways. He was one of the few people in Singapore at the time who kept a carriage and pair. It was a gorgeous affair—a big barouche hung on Cee springs, lined with white silk, and drawn by a pair of big Calcutta horses. The syces' liveries were a blaze of colour. Nothing could match the soft complacency of Bannerjee being driven round the Esplanade in his chariot. He was far too busy about other things to attend to business, which he left to Matthew Small. He had heaps of money, and was inordinately vain of his accomplishments. He devoted long hours to the study of the British poets, and being gifted with a remarkable memory he never lost a chance of spouting columns of Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and various stray poets who need not be mentioned. He was a keen Freemason. His speeches, which were always of inordinate length whenever he got on his legs at the banquets of that mystic fraternity, were the terror of Zetland in the East.

In an evil hour, Bannerjee made the acquaintance of Colonel Shendall, commanding the 99th Bombay Invincibles, at that time stationed at Singapore. The Colonel was a fine, handsome, irresponsible soldier, through whose fingers money slipped like melted butter. The Colonel's wife had died young. Mere gossips said she had been worried into an early grave, because she had never been able to see the colour of a rupee, while all sorts of persons

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wanted to be paid. But before departing this life poor Mrs. Shendall gave birth to a daughter, who at the time of our story had grown up to be a splendid brunette. She was of the type of beauty which Singapore ladies called "bold," but it was most effective. Miss Julia Shendall was a finished coquette, who had learned a great deal of worldly wisdom from her graceless but fascinating father. Exactly how an intimacy sprang up between Colonel Shendall and Bannerjee the Parsee, it is hard to say. The Colonel found it pleasant in the first place that he was never asked to pay his bills, and then Bannerjee was such a civil chap, who knew his own place. He was rather more than surprised when one fine afternoon Bannerjee, very timidly and with an extraordinary amount of circumlocution, begged the honour of his presence at a little dinner which he was giving at his humble residence, picturesquely named Elysium. The Colonel was a bit nonplussed, but said he would accept the invitation. Bannerjee sent his famous barouche to bring his honoured guest from his bungalow to Elysium. The Colonel found quite a good lot of men invited to meet him; the dinner was about perfect, the wines were really good, and Bannerjee's vast rooms were cool and comfortable. After dinner, there was a nice game of cards on the verandah, from which the Colonel rose the winner of a considerable pile. As the Colonel drove back to his quarters in the big barouche, he thought that he had not spent such a pleasant evening for a long time. He particularly admired the agreeable way in which his Parsee host lost his money at cards. "Wish they were all like Bannerjee!" he mused.

After this, the intimacy ripened like Jonah's gourd. The lovely Miss Shendall graced Elysium with her presence if other ladies were invited, and as the fascinated Parsee offered her the use of his carriage whenever she wanted it, she took him at his word. Julia found a carriage and pair a convenient substitute for a hack-gharry, and besides, it cost nothing. She was always driving about

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in Bannerjee's equipage, and if spiteful people talked about the "Shendall barouche," what did it matter to her? And she rather liked the gay evenings at Elysium; they were such a contrast to the dull times in her father's little bit of a bungalow at the Tanglin Barracks. True, Bannerjee rather bored her at times by reciting yards of "Lalla Rookh" and other poems at her, but this he partly made up for, by his quaint and laboriously acquired little bits of slang with which he enlivened his conversation. Bannerjee set up to be a past master of the English language.

If Julia had no scruples, her father had his qualms. In India, the Colonel would not condescend to associate with the whitest of white civilians unless he happened to be in the service of the H. E. I. C. As for dining with "a nigger," he would as soon have thought of saying his prayers! However, it was only a little place like Singapore, where there was no military society, so what was the harm? And, again, when Shendall had made a bad book at the races, and was really in a deuce of a hole, who was it but the ever-obliging Bannerjee who begged him as a favour to borrow a little money, which was nothing but a burden and anxiety to his humble friend? It was the Colonel himself who, with his usual heedlessness, let out that it was Bannerjee who had come to the rescue at the critical moment. The idea that the Parsee had any designs on his daughter never so much as entered his mind.

Colonel Shendall was, therefore, rather mystified when one fine morning he received a long letter filled with clouds of compliments, from which it appeared that Bannerjee desired an interview on private and urgent business.

"What is the beggar up to?" growled the Colonel. "If he wants to get some money out of me, what's all this rot about me and Wellington, Lord Clive, Warren Hastings, and the velvet eyes of beauty? Hanged if I can make it out! It may be Bannerjee's way of putting on the screw, but I've never seen it done this way before!"

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The perplexed soldier was pacing up and down his verandah, when Bannerjee drove up in his barouche. A long and bewildering conversation took place on that little verandah, in the course of which the unhappy Colonel lost himself in the midst of very jungles of poetry and prose.

Spurred by the Colonel to come to the point, the luckless Bannerjee gasped: "If the peerless and incomparable fair Julia will have me, my hand, my heart, my fortune and the barouche, they are all hers, straight from the word Go! My intentions are strictly Honnerable, and no blooming error!"

"What!" roared the Colonel, in a towering rage. "D'ye mean to say——" But here he choked. Then he called his visitor "a damned nigger," and being a man of violence all round, both in word and deed, he seized the poor Parsee by the nape of his neck and literally kicked him downstairs!

Bannerjee crawled into his carriage, a crushed and insulted man, and drove home to Elysium in a sort of Oriental delirium. Next day he sent for Mr. Angus, the estate agent, to find a buyer for Elysium, and sold out his interest in the firm to Matthew Small; while the coach and horses, which had so often whirled Julia along the Singapore roads, were disposed of at the next Saturday's auction to the highest bidder.

The broken-hearted Bannerjee, having settled his affairs, embarked for his native land, where, if the stern truth must be told, a number of wives were anxiously waiting for him. He also took with him a couple of helpmeets, who were relegated to very secluded corners of Elysium what time the gallant Parsee entertained Julia and the Colonel in its marble halls.

For a few days, Colonel Shendall felt a bit uncomfortable at times concerning his summary ejection of Bannerjee, but when it transpired that the magnanimous Parsee had no desire to trouble him about certain matters

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of account between them, still less to take a revenge on the man who kicked him downstairs, why, what could be better? Of course, poor Julia knew nothing of the Parsee's aspirations, and congratulated her father on having got rid of the man so cheap. Two years later, Julia made a brilliant marriage in Calcutta society, in which she became the "glass of fashion and the mould of form," as Banerjee would have said. The Parsee partner having gone his ways, the now purely British firm of John Small and Co. started on a career of increasing usefulness and prosperity.

To return to our story, as Small was not leaving until three months later, the Captain decided to take his son for a last cruise on the *Samson*.

The loading of the *Samson* being completed, Captain Northwood, with his wife and son on board, set sail for Labuan. It was destined to be the last voyage which Master Johnnie ever made in the fine old ship, and came perilously near to being his father's last trip in that or any other vessel. They had not been more than two or three days at sea, when Captain Northwood found to his annoyance that the new crew, which he had just signed on at Singapore, was largely composed of very undesirable elements. No doubt the *ghaut serang* had run in some bad characters amongst his men. The ordinary discipline of the ship was nowhere, and she was being sailed almost anyhow. Then there was trouble over thefts and disreputable fights amongst the sailors.

To a man like Northwood this sort of thing was intolerable, so the next time that trouble arose he had half a dozen of his "wasters" soundly flogged. The procedure was very simple. The culprits were made fast to the rigging by their wrists, when Cassim and his two mates flogged them in turn, with a thing called a "colt"—a short length of rope, tightly wound round with twine and beeswax and terminating in a pointed end. This "colt" could hurt a good deal without causing much

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real damage to the sufferer. The necessary number of lashes having been inflicted by Cassim and his *tindals*, the men were cast off and sent below.

Northwood hoped that such a lesson would have the desired effect. That night, when he took his watch on deck, the weather was fine, with a moderate breeze, and the *Samson* was doing her five or six knots. The Captain, unsuspecting and unarmed, was pacing up and down his quarter-deck, when suddenly a band of native sailors made a rush at him. He promptly knocked down two of them. Then a knife flashed through the air, and he sank, bleeding profusely, on the deck. The mutineers, in a hurry to carry out the rest of their plan, which was to throw their captain overboard, had some difficulty in lifting such a heavy man. But they had got him nearly to the level of the rail when Mrs. Northwood, rushing through the crowd, flung herself on her husband's body and caused him to fall back on the deck.

By this time Cassim arrived on the scene, closely followed by Mr. Jenkins, who, without any further ado, fired his revolver and shot one of the mutineers dead. That shot cowed the other ruffians, who allowed themselves to be put in irons. The Captain was carried to his cabin, where it was discovered that his wound consisted of a great gash right across the forehead, which had cut to the bone. He carried a big scar on his forehead to the end of his days, but though there had been a considerable loss of blood, the wound in itself was not particularly dangerous.

At any rate, Captain Northwood stood on his main-deck next afternoon, with a bandaged head, while Cassim and his mates were at work on the mutineers. This time they laid in with a will, and had not Captain Northwood stopped them in time they would have literally flogged the treacherous scoundrels to death. As it was, they were not worth much when they were cut down from their seizings and carried below. On the arrival of the *Samson* at

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Labuan they were handed over to the police, and after a brief trial were sent to work for several years in the chain-gangs on the roads of the colony.

Captain Northwood never again experienced any trouble of the kind, but he had had a very narrow escape. But for the devotion of his wife he certainly would have been thrown overboard by the mutineers.

The rest of the voyage passed pleasantly and quietly enough. At times "Baba Johnnie" was allowed to go with his ayah to have a talk with Cassim and his friends. Wonderful tales they were which Cassim told him, of pirates, of wizards, and of treasures guarded by fabulous monsters. The little boy took a deep interest in these stories and was never tired of hearing them.

In the natural course of events the *Samson* sailed into Singapore harbour again, and on one sorrowful afternoon a few days later (it was in April, 1864), Johnnie Northwood was handed over to the kind care of Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Small, on board of the P. & O. steamer *Emu*. The boy was heartbroken at finding himself at sea without his parents, and would not at first be comforted; but child-like it was not very long before he was running about the decks of the *Emu*. It pleased him greatly to explain to the Smalls' children what a vastly inferior packet the P. & O. liner was, compared to his father's ship the *Samson*.

It was some twelve years later before Johnnie saw Singapore again, and during that time the place had changed as much as he had himself. The fine old houses on the Beach Road had disappeared, to make way for a foul-smelling and howling Chinese quarter. Many other notable developments were in progress, consequent on the increasing trade and importance of the place, and the opening of the Suez Canal.

But the old Singapore was the best. The society of the olden days was hospitable, informal, and truly pleasant; while the colonists all round enjoyed a good measure of

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prosperity. People then thought nothing of dropping in unexpectedly on their neighbours at dinner-time, and if they brought a friend or two with them, why, so much the better. Impromptu dances were got up at half an hour's notice, and young people got married without thinking that the equilibrium of the earth would be disturbed in consequence. The Singaporeans of those times had no submarine telegraph-cables or telephones, no trains, tramways, or rickshaws, and scarcely any Germans in their midst. How the benighted beings of that distant day got on without these and many other blessings which have since been lavished on Singapore it is hard to say. But somehow they seemed to enjoy life in their lovely island, and though it must seem almost incredible, these primitive people made quite a lot of money by selling British manufactures imported in British bottoms, and by shipping Straits produce to the United Kingdom under their own flag. *Nous avons changé tout cela !*

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD MAKES A VOYAGE TO SAIGON

CAPTAIN SIMPSON sailed the *Don Pedro* on the Saigon trade with considerable success, and made the ship pay very nicely ; but the poor fellow caught a fever and died of it. By rights the command of the *Don Pedro* ought to have gone to Mr. Jenkins ; but when it was offered to him, Jenkins preferred to remain as chief officer of the *Samson*. Northwood was then got at by a certain Captain Blewitt, who had lost his ship near the Natunas, and had not since been able to get another command. There seemed to be nothing discreditable about the loss of Blewitt's ship. Misfortunes will happen to master mariners—though it may be noted that, throughout his long career as a seaman, Northwood himself never lost a ship. Northwood, however, had an expensive taste for helping lame dogs over all sorts of stiles, and as Blewitt was out of a job he gave him the command of the *Don Pedro*.

There was something about Captain Blewitt which Northwood did not quite like, yet the new commander of the *Don Pedro* was a taking sort of man, a good-looking fellow of some forty years of age, well educated, and well-connected, as it afterwards appeared. There was nothing unsatisfactory about the new captain for several voyages. Indeed, he showed himself to be a smart sailor, who could make quick passages. But after a certain time, Northwood had occasion to remark that, once the *Don Pedro* got into harbour, the barque rode at her anchors until she threatened to "ground on her beef bones," and that the captain himself seemed to be a man much given up to his pleasures when in port.

Captain Northwood makes a Voyage to Saigon

So Northwood talked very seriously to Blewitt about his methods of transacting business for owner's account ; for in those days the master of a ship acted as agent and everything else. But the plausible Blewitt had always a story with which to explain away unpleasant details. One day he greatly astonished Northwood by making inquiries about the son at home, his age, etc. It appeared that one of Blewitt's uncles was a governor of Christ's Hospital. A "presentation," that is to say a gift amounting to a free education of the Northwood boy in the Blue Coat School, could be arranged without much difficulty, he said.

Northwood had a pretty fair idea of what the Blue Coat School really was at that time. It meant a rough and hardy life for a lad, which would "knock the nonsense out of him." As for the educational side of the system, there was no reason why Johnnie should not become a "Grecian" and rise to distinction by his own unaided efforts. Northwood's unwillingness to cadge a free education for his son was easily got over by his subscribing to the funds of Christ's Hospital. The whole thing chimed in with the father's plans for Johnnie's upbringing.

Mrs. Northwood, who, with a woman's insight into character, hated Captain Blewitt and all his works most heartily, protested in vain against her son being sent to the Blue Coat School. Her objections were met with remarks about "mollycoddling" and "making a man of him" and other pronouncements equally wise, until she was crushed beneath their weight, and reduced to despairing silence on the subject which was nearest her heart.

So, thanks to Captain Blewitt, Johnnie Northwood was sent to the Blue Coat School.

Henceforward, Blewitt did just as he pleased with the *Don Pedro*. Once he got the barque to Saigon, there seemed to be no end to her stay at that picturesque port. In time Northwood got to hear that the captain's dinners and dances on board the *Don Pedro* were the delight of a

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certain section of Saigon society. Finally, he wrote to a friend in Saigon, requesting him to interview the skipper of the *Don Pedro*, and ask him why he did not sail for Singapore. The answer was quite crisp. It appeared that Blewitt had not sailed for Singapore because he *hadn't spent his freight yet!*

Northwood sent the *Samson* away in charge of Mr. Jenkins, and remained at Singapore until such time as the *Don Pedro* should arrive. One fine morning Captain Blewitt actually did get with his ship to Singapore, and was promptly invited by his owner to settle up his accounts. These were simple enough—practically there were none! All the money that could be advanced on account of freights had been drawn and spent to the last dollar.

So Captain Blewitt's valuable services were no longer required. Northwood decided to sail the *Don Pedro* to Saigon himself, just to see how things really looked in that quarter. Blewitt went about saying that Northwood was a most ungrateful person, oblivious of services rendered to his son, and altogether a man with whom it was not safe to do business. Captain Shelback, happening to meet Northwood in the Square, put the matter to him in a distinctly vulgar way: "So you've given Blewitt the dirty kick out, have yer?" he asked. Northwood simply had to grin and bear it.

The situation was one which left him at a very considerable loss. Whatever Shelback and one or two others might say, Blewitt knew perfectly well that he would never be able to get command of another ship as long as he remained in Singapore. The captain who would not sail until he spent his freight got to be more famous than was quite comfortable, so he took a passage on the first ship bound for Calcutta, after which nobody troubled themselves any further about him.

Captain Northwood made a fast passage in the *Don Pedro* to Saigon, and rounding Cape St. James, slowly drifted down the snake-like curves of the mud-coloured

Captain Northwood makes a Voyage to Saigon

river, and finally anchored in the stream off the town.

Saigon in those days was a poor and squalid place, but it was already the centre of a very important rice-trade. The cathedral, the splendid palace of the Governor-General, the palatial post office, the handsome boulevards lined with fine shops and cafés, which make the modern Saigon like a little Paris built in Indo-China, were not as yet in existence. Saigon, as Northwood saw it, consisted of a few plain whitewashed buildings, a rice-mill or two, and a shabby perspective of thousands of *paillotes*, the huts in which the native population swarmed. The best buildings were inhabited by the Chinese merchants. On every side, as far as the eye could see, Saigon was surrounded by endless miles of swampy paddy-fields. Nothing relieved the flat monotony of the dreary scene. The Europeans who lived in this sweltering climate all looked pallid and unhealthy. There were lots of soldiers to be seen about, but the poor fellows looked even worse than the civilians, and numbers of them found their graves in the wretched place.

When Northwood started to work, he came across more results of the Blewitt system. A merchant said to him: "So you are the new skipper of the *Don Pedro*! Well, I thought Blewitt was going it too strong altogether. Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Captain. You know perfectly well that the market-rate for Singapore is fifty cents per picul, but if you'll sign a charter-party at thirty-five cents, I'll give you five cents on the whole freight for yourself. How does *that* strike you?"

Northwood said it struck him very forcibly indeed; but that as he happened to be the owner of the *Don Pedro*—

Here the merchant whistled, and remarked, *à propos de bottes*, that Saigon was a damned hole anyway! However, he wanted the ship, and signed the charter-party at the full rate.

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Northwood began to wonder how much Blewitt had really cost him from first to last, but of course that was a thing now beyond calculation.

The *Don Pedro* loaded in a few days, and making a good run to Singapore, brought to an end a really profitable voyage. But Northwood felt that he had had enough of the Saigon trade, and as he had a very fair offer for the *Don Pedro* he sold the barque.

Mr. Jenkins now reverted to his old position as chief officer, with a handsome bonus as an acknowledgment of his efficiency while acting as master of the *Samson*. So business once more went back to the old lines, and Captain Northwood sailed his favourite ship the *Samson* to the Borneo coast, which he knew and loved so well.

CHAPTER V

NORTHWOOD, JUNIOR, BECOMES "SOMETHING IN THE CITY"

THE education of Johnnie Northwood was a sad mixture. At the Hertford branch of the Blue Coat School, bullying, fagging and flogging went on uninterruptedly, and the two years spent by the boy in that institution were mostly spent in learning to take lickings without flinching, and in fighting bigger boys than himself. Incidentally he learned some Latin. When his mother arrived in England, she was much displeased with his surroundings and promptly transferred him to a horribly expensive and fearfully suburban "Collegiate School for Young Gentlemen." At this establishment he acquired a thorough knowledge of French, thanks to his aptitude for languages, and a liking for Molière and other French classics. Of anything else likely to be of the slightest use to him he had not the faintest knowledge. The dream of the lad's life was to enter the Navy. But his father decided to make him a Merchant Prince. It was the mistake of Captain Northwood's life.

First of all, the Captain wished his son, after leaving school, to serve for a couple of years in a shipbroker's office in Liverpool; but as the lad's mother, who was for the present residing in London, seemed to think that one office was just like another, and strongly objected to leaving town, a place was found for him by Mr. Leigh—the same old friend of the Captain's with whose family Johnnie had stayed when he first reached England—in the offices of Messrs. George Gray and Co., a highly respectable firm of tea-brokers in one of the "Lanes" of

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the City. In 1873 tea-brokers thought a great deal of themselves and made a lot of money. It was usual to pay a premium of four hundred and twenty pounds in order to get a young fellow into George Gray and Co.'s office in Rood Lane; but, thanks to Mr. Leigh's influence, this fee was waived in Johnnie Northwood's case. Still, it was considered a very great favour that he was allowed to serve for nothing.

Johnnie was equipped for his commercial duties with a new outfit, comprising a top-hat, a tail-coat, and a pair of stiff, shiny gloves, all of which were horrid abominations to him, and thus attired was taken by Mr. Leigh into a large room fitted with a skylight, and lined with canisters of tea from top to bottom. Wide dressers provided with drawers ran round the room. In front of one of these dressers a group of men were busily employed sipping tea out of little white china bowls, which tea they promptly spat out again into a huge tin affair, shaped like a dice-box.

Mr. Leigh was very cordially greeted by these gentlemen, and having introduced "Mr. Northwood" to Mr. George Gray, Mr. Wooler and Mr. Dixon, he also started sipping and spitting tea like the rest of them. After an animated discussion, he said he would buy a "break" of two hundred half-chests of Panyongs at one and ninepence three-farthings. Johnnie anxiously inquired of Mr. Leigh what he was going to do with such a lot of tea, whereupon everybody laughed.

Mr. George Gray, a stout, good-looking gentleman, with a pleasant face, now assured Mr. Leigh that he would take a special interest in his young friend; and, Leigh having taken his departure, Johnnie was left in Gray's sale room. He stood about uncomfortably, feeling a guy in his new clothes, until Mr. Wooler peremptorily ordered him to wash up some pots and cups.

"What?" Johnnie ejaculated in blank amazement. But Mr. Wooler put a tray of pots and cups in his hands and told him to wash them at the sink.

The boy did as he was ordered, broke the handle of a

Northwood Junior becomes "Something in the City"

pot, chipped two cups, and brought the tray back to Mr. Wooler, who seemed much put out because some of the old tea-leaves had been left sticking to the crockery.

"You'll never make a tea-taster until you learn to wash pots and cups!" he growled. He took the tray back to the sink himself, and washed and polished them until they shone again. Then he put his beloved pots and cups on a dresser and started in again at his old game of sipping and spitting tea. It all seemed very strange to Johnnie, who was greatly surprised to see a lot of grown-up men amusing themselves with such a childish and messy occupation.

Presently Mr. George Gray shouted to him: "Put the kettle on the fire." Johnnie obediently picked up a small copper kettle, which had a marble inside to prevent "furring," and put it on a flaming gas-ring. In five minutes Mr. Gray said: "Bring me the kettle." As Johnnie picked the kettle off the gas-ring, the bottom of the thing dropped out, and a red-hot marble rolling up against Mr. Gray's boot made that gentleman skip.

"Well, I'm blest! D'ye mean to say you never put any water in the kettle?" ejaculated Gray.

No, it had never occurred to Johnnie to do any such thing; he had never boiled kettles before.

"He's broken a pot and chipped two cups already," growled Wooler, as he picked up the ruined kettle.

Mr. Dixon, for his part, calmly expressed the opinion that Northwood was a nice young man, but that he would compel George Gray and Co. to close their doors before the week was out.

At one o'clock Johnnie was told he might go to lunch, and that the "Oriental" across the way was as good a place as any other. So he went to the "Oriental," and greatly enjoyed a steak and potatoes, washed down with half a pint of bitter. It seemed to him the only sensible business of the day.

During the afternoon he cleaned some more pots and

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cups, and at six p.m. walked across London Bridge to catch his train. His mother was overjoyed to see him back safely, and had prepared a lovely little dinner for him in honour of his first day's career as a business man. She was now quite sure that her son had done with all stupid ideas of being a soldier or a sailor, and was on his road to success and wealth. She was more than surprised, however, at his revelations concerning his first day's work in the City. In Singapore, she said, merchants made fortunes in shipping thousands of tons of gambier and pepper and things, but Chinese compradores and coolies handled the actual stuff, which was rarely so much as seen by the merchants themselves. They sat in large offices, where they wrote clever letters, and made up accounts in large books. That was how money was made! There was Mr. Jasper Mackenzie, of the famous firm of Brownlow and Co., who made a fortune before he was thirty, and who was now a Member of Council and so rich that he actually did not know what to do with all his money. As for Mr. Brownlow himself, now managing the London house, he began life as a poor boy in a shop, and now he could only manage to keep himself from becoming indecently wealthy by giving away to charities all that he made over three hundred thousand pounds per annum. Both Brownlow and Jasper Mackenzie were celebrated for writing clever letters, and being awfully smart at accounts. She would speak to Mr. Leigh about it at once. Washing pots and cups indeed!

Next day Johnnie was sent round with a bear-leader, in the shape of Mr. Leslie, to deliver samples to different dealers. The samples were neatly put up in paper packets, inscribed with cabalistic heart- and diamond-shaped designs with numbers, and weighed a few pounds. These were put in a coarse blue bag, which Johnnie had to sling over his shoulder as he tramped with Mr. Leslie to all sorts of different tea-dealers' offices.

Young Leslie was the son of a wealthy hop-grower in

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Kent, who had paid four hundred guineas to get his boy into George Gray and Co.'s office, and being senior in its service by a couple of months, made Johnnie carry the bag. The two young fellows had lunch together and soon became excellent friends.

During the day Johnnie slipped round to see Mr. Leigh, and astonished him by urgently requesting that he might be allowed to wear a cap instead of the top-hat, which hurt his head. Mr. Leigh represented that such a thing was impossible, because tea-brokers were gentlemen, and had to dress accordingly. Johnnie retorted that he did not know that "pot-washers" and errand-boys were gentlemen, and gave vent to alarming threats about going to sea.

Mr. Leigh very kindly pacified him as best he could, and said he would try to have his duties altered. That evening he and Mrs. Northwood had a long conversation about her son. Leigh pointed out that the Sale Room was the executive branch of the business, and the most highly esteemed department. Still, as Johnnie was not actually going into the tea-trade, it might be better to get him transferred to the counting house.

About this there was no difficulty. Mr. Gray was always glad to have a vacancy in the sale room worth four hundred guineas to him, while Mr. Wooler hailed Johnnie's departure with indecent exultation.

Johnnie was promptly sent into the counting house, a dingy sort of place, under the charge of an elderly and morose person named Jones, who had half a dozen clerks in his department. The whole lot of them spent their time in writing things in big books and on sheets of paper. Eastby, the senior clerk, tossed over to Johnnie a pile of printed documents, which he discovered were weight-notes relating to certain quantities of tea stored at Hay's Wharf. Blank spaces were left at the bottom of the weight-notes to be filled in with the price and total cost of so many pounds of tea, less so much discount at a given rate.

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Johnnie read one or two of the documents very carefully without in the least understanding their purport. Eastby then "cast out" a few of these weight-notes with amazing rapidity, and explained that that was how the thing was done. Johnnie tried very hard to tackle his problem, but produced no other result than some unseemly blots on the top weight-note, and a scramble of very untidy figures on a sheet of foolscap.

When Mr. Jones himself took his new assistant in hand, he discovered that he was quite unable to calculate an easy sum; also, that he wrote a hand which nobody but himself could read. Mr. Jones thereon had something to say about rich men's sons being a useless lot, and the curse of George Gray and Co.

So this was the result of Johnnie's education when it was put to its first practical test! His seemed to be an absolutely hopeless case. After a time he was utilized to take round cheques, buy postage stamps, draw tea-warrants from the bank, and clear odd lots of tea at the customs in cases when the duty to be paid amounted to a few shillings. At best he was an unprofitable servant even on no pay, and his cool impudence failed to recommend him either to Mr. Jones or to Mr. Chandler, the junior partner in George Gray and Co.

Chandler was a very precise and natty gentleman, to whom young Northwood's free manners were a great offence. A few months after he had joined, Johnnie got skylarking with young Leslie and flung the petty cash book at his head. The missile missed Leslie and went crashing through a glass door into the partners' room, where it fell on Chandler's desk amidst a lot of splintered glass. Chandler, who was dreadfully upset by this unseemly occurrence, sent for Johnnie and summarily dismissed him on the spot.

Johnnie's feelings on "getting the sack" were varied, but, on the whole, he was glad. He had no taste for a business life, and was thankful that his mercantile career

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had come to a close. He went round, of course, to tell Mr. Leigh of his dismissal, only to find that his wise and kind friend took a very different view of the matter. Dismissal was a disgraceful thing, which would grieve his father and mother very much. Somehow the matter would have to be arranged. So Mr. Leigh went off to see George Gray. It was observed that he bought another "break" of tea, which happened to be Oolongs this time, but in the end Johnnie got reinstated after being severely reprimanded.

As time went on, Johnnie got somewhat ashamed of his inefficiency, and said as much to Mr. Leigh, who, with his inexhaustible good nature, took the lad in hand, and in the course of a few private lessons showed him how to overcome the simple mystery of calculating weight-notes, and other details of office work. Great was the astonishment of Eastby when one fine morning Johnnie resolutely tackled a pile of weight-notes, and having cast them out correctly, handed them over to him. Mr. Jones was somewhat sour over this unexpected display of business ability, and said something about a young humbug who could work fast enough if he chose to do so.

Johnnie's home-life at this time was exceedingly happy. His love for his mother dominated everything else, and the delightful family circle of the Leighs was always open to the Northwoods. If he was dull about business, he took a precocious interest in everything else, and devoured books and publications of every kind with voracity. Particularly did he keep up his studies in French, which turned out to be in after life not merely an useful, but an indispensable acquisition.

Johnnie, having entered George Gray's service at the commencement of the year, was called into the partners' room at Christmas-time and handed a cheque for five pounds, with the gracious remark that it was a vast deal more than he was worth to the firm. Johnnie was overjoyed, however, and having got Eastby to give him five

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sovereigns for his cheque, hurried off to a well-known shop, where he invested the bulk of the money in an elaborate, but futile writing-desk, with mother-of-pearl fittings and inlayings, which he carried home with him. He had always had an abundance of pocket-money, but out of the first five pounds actually earned by him his most urgent idea was to buy a present for his mother. Had he presented her with a golden casket full of the most precious jewels she could not have been more delighted. She nearly hugged him to death, and wrote a long letter to her husband to explain what a splendid boy their son really was.

The succeeding Christmas, Johnnie, who was actually becoming of some use at No. 101, Rood Lane, was once more called into the partners' room, and handed a cheque for ten pounds, without any remarks from either Mr. Gray or Mr. Chandler, other than the compliments of the season. It is true, however, that Mr. Dixon, who happened to be present at the time, muttered that he always knew that young Northwood would ultimately ruin George Gray and Co., and that he was on the eve of accomplishing his object.

But Johnnie was now about finished with George Gray and Co. Captain Northwood was on his way to England to take his wife and son back to Singapore, and Johnnie was not to go back to 101, Rood Lane after the 31st December.

At last one fine morning, Captain Northwood arrived in the London Docks on board the Blue Funnel steamer *Agamemnon*. Johnnie scrambled on board the vessel directly the gangway was made fast, and had no difficulty in picking out the towering form of his father, although he had not seen him for so many years. Both were delighted with each other. Johnnie thought his father the grandest man he had ever beheld, while the captain was evidently proud of his son, who was, indeed, a fine-grown lad, with a bright, intelligent face. There was a



Photo. by
C. Smith, Boston, Mass.

"The Captain"

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striking resemblance between the two which betrayed their relationship at once. As time went on and Johnnie began to unconsciously imitate his father's tricks of manner, this resemblance got to be quite absurd.

It was a very happy little party which was re-united that day at Portobello Lodge, the commencement of many glorious days for Johnnie, to whom life had suddenly become a round of pleasures. There were delightful coaching trips to Brighton, visits to Portsmouth, holidays in the Isle of Wight, remembered long afterwards. Captain Northwood was always a cheery and amiable companion, whose quaint remarks were studded with sailor-like phrases, which were sometimes more descriptive than elegant. One day, when he was on the top of the Brighton coach, a man driving a smart pony dashed past the team and almost immediately afterwards upset his dog-cart and rolled out into the road, whereupon the Captain, with a pull at his Manila cheroot, observed to his son: "The lubber to wind'ard has turned turtle." Johnnie was mightily tickled with the remark, and talking next day to his mother about somebody who had come to grief over something or another, referred to him as "the lubber to wind'ard." Mrs. Northwood was anything but pleased, and told Johnnie that in future he had better leave the use of such expressions to his father.

Captain Northwood greatly enjoyed the charming society of the Leigh family, with whom he had become a great favourite. But in spite of the advantages offered by the proximity of Portobello Lodge to Stainsbury House, the home of the Leighs, a variety of business and social considerations prompted Captain Northwood to shift his camp to Bayswater, where at No. 21, Wellington Road he hired a suite of large, though fairly dingy, rooms at a considerable cost.

CHAPTER VI

SINGAPORE IN BAYSWATER

IN former days it was supposed to be rather amusing to call Bayswater "Asia Minor," on account of the number of Anglo-Indians who used to congregate in that particular district of London. Many of Captain Northwood's own cronies lived near Wellington Street. Johnnie now saw a good deal of gentlemen with different complexions and different manners from most people, gentlemen who had much to say with unusual emphasis about gambier, pepper, and gutta-percha, freights, exchange and piece goods—all of which mysterious things seemed to lend themselves to speculations which evidently were not always successful. Most of the Captain's friends were in opulent circumstances, but others were clearly "broke" and made no attempt to hide it. Gambier, pepper, or perhaps the two together in combination with gutta-percha, had ruined them. One of these fallen heroes would make the most gallant efforts to equip himself with the necessary capital for yet one more battle, whilst another would broken-heartedly accept his doom, which was to live meanly and obscurely for the rest of his life, glad enough if (as happened from time to time) one of his more prosperous brethren from Singapore would assist him to eke out his scanty resources with a handful of sovereigns, or, maybe, two or three bank-notes.

Merchants, lawyers, a doctor or two, and an occasional captain from the seas of the Far East, were amongst the general run of visitors at Wellington Street. Johnnie noted with amazement the wonderful clothing, deportment and language of these gentlemen. His own father

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wore his small gold hunter suspended at the end of a very thin, long gold chain, which he wore round his neck, and pulled through his waistcoat in some marvellous way. Like the rest, his father smoked a great many enormous Manila cheroots, would drink a brandy and soda at odd times, and converse in English so mixed up with Malay phrases as to be unintelligible to the uninitiated. The ladies who came to see Mrs. Northwood were also a revelation to Johnnie. Some of them, especially the elder ladies, were quite bronzed, while others were very pale and white. They seemed to know quite as much about pepper, gambier, and the financial resources of their friends as their own husbands. They talked freely about subjects in which it was evident that Johnnie was expected to take no interest; for if one of the ladies looked a bit significantly at him, the conversation at once got so mixed with Malay that the young man was quite out of it. If one of Mrs. Northwood's friends felt that a brandy and soda would do her more good than a cup of tea, she ordered it, and Mingo brought the tall tumbler on a tray as naturally as possible.

This was all very interesting and astonishing to young Northwood. There was a magnificent *sans-gêne* about these people. They all called him "Johnnie," and did not scruple to tell his father or mother before his face that he was a fine handsome lad, who would make a good use of the Northwood dollars when the time came. Everybody was exceedingly kind to him, and he enjoyed life very much at this period, but in his quiet moments he could not help thinking occasionally of Mr. Chandler or the Leighs, and what they would say of his present surroundings.

Captain Northwood was an indefatigable frequenter of museums, picture-galleries, operas and theatres. He took his son to Portsmouth to show him the navy yards, to Brighton because he liked coaching. Mrs. Northwood accompanied them in their expeditions to such beauty-spots as the Isle of Wight, and altogether it was a very happy time indeed. The elder Northwood was a keen and

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sagacious observer. He had a very felicitous manner of interesting his son in what they saw, and of developing his perceptive and reasoning faculties. At Brighton and Folkestone he taught his son to become a good swimmer, an accomplishment to which the young man afterwards owed his life on more than one occasion. The captain himself was like a fish in the water, and had saved several people from drowning without thinking very much of it. True, he had little ways which, while they were amusing enough, were rather trying to his son's sense of dignity. He never went out into the streets of London without a large folding map of the great city in his pocket. Rather than ask a policeman or anybody else the way to a place, he would consult his map, and, taking his bearings by a couple of steeples, or any other prominent landmarks, eventually navigate himself to his destination. On one windy day, when he wanted to mark out his course for an exceptionally long voyage, he calmly went up the steps of a private dwelling-house, placed one corner of his disastrous map under the knocker and spread the rest of it all over the door. He then proceeded to chart his projected cruise with the greatest satisfaction. Meanwhile, his son stood about on the pavement trying to appear as if his father did not belong to him, and devoutly hoping that nobody would require to open that door until his parent had done with it.

Again, he would catch his father hobnobbing at a bar or hotel smoking-room with perfect strangers on terms of the most intimate familiarity. Should one of these newly-found acquaintances want to borrow a sovereign on one of the usual pretexts, Northwood would always let him have it. In reply to remonstrances on the subject, he would say: "Well! what's the harm? The poor devil wants it more than I do." Then he would light the thin end of yet another Manila cheroot, and sally forth apparently much refreshed with the idea that he had ministered to the wants of a fellow-man.

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After much holiday-making, Johnnie was told on one fine morning to get ready for a stroke of business, and to that end to get into his frock-coat, top-hat, and a new pair of gloves, provided for the occasion. His anxious father told him that he was going to take him to visit the great Jasper Mackenzie, who had long years ago promised that Johnnie should enter the service of Brownlow and Co. A desk in the Brownlow offices was considered equivalent to a commission entitling the fortunate holder thereof to a considerable fortune within a reasonable period.

Father and son got into a cab and drove to Newbolt Court, in which were situated the London offices of the great house of Brownlow. Arrived at their destination, Captain Northwood took his son into the Court and began carefully to scrutinize his general appearance. He fully appreciated the lad's bright and open disposition, and loved him for being such a really nice-looking, strapping six-footer. But at this critical moment Johnnie's appalling ignorance of business matters and his crass indifference to office routine weighed heavily on his spirits. He suddenly decided that the less Jasper Mackenzie saw of Johnnie the better; so ordering his son to wait in the courtyard until further orders, Captain Northwood passed alone through the heavy swing-doors inscribed with the name "BROWNLOW & CO." on the shiny brass plates.

It seemed an interminable wait to poor Johnnie. As a matter of fact, Jasper Mackenzie and Captain Northwood were busily "gossiping" about all sorts of things, past and present, in far-off Singapore, and forgot all about the young gentleman who had been cooling his heels in Newbolt Court for the greater part of an hour. At last the pair of them came through the swing-doors, when Captain Northwood discovered that Johnnie, bored to extinction by his long detention, had taken off his gloves, tipped his top hat well on the back of his head, and hands in pockets was strolling upon the stone courtyard, whistling a tune

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from *La Fille de Madame Angot* with considerable shrillness and accuracy.

"By the way, Jasper, this is my son," said Northwood.

"Oh, indeed!" commented a tall and stately gentleman, of a decidedly stern aspect. Then addressing Johnnie very abruptly, he said, "D'ye understand anything about book-keeping?"

"No, certainly not!" retorted Johnnie, with the astonished air of a good young man being suddenly asked if he happens to be an habitual drunkard, or something of the kind. The great man looked gloomily at the phenomenon before him, turned to Northwood, and taking him by the arm, said: "Come along! and we'll have some lunch."

Johnnie was astounded at not being included in the invitation, and stared at Jasper Mackenzie until his father curtly commanded, "Go home to your mother!" and walked off with his friend.

Poor Mrs. Northwood was greatly grieved when she heard Johnnie's picturesque recital of the interview, and his outspoken comments concerning the manners of merchant princes. "You *might* have said, quite truthfully, that you would *learn* all about book-keeping!" she moaned. She was afraid that Johnnie had ruined a plan upon which so many hopes had been built ever since he was a mere child. However, when Captain Northwood turned up later in the day, he was quite cheerful, and said everything was all right. He had no fault to find with Johnnie; but as Jasper Mackenzie expressed a wish that his new recruit should join the Singapore staff at the commencement of the following January, and the autumn was well advanced, Captain Northwood proposed to break up the camp at Wellington Street and take his family to the Far East.

The route selected was *via* Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles, in easy stages, and by a Messageries Maritimes steamer to Singapore. Northwood's decision pleased everybody. Mrs. Northwood was longing to get back to Singapore just

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as much as her son, who dimly remembered the place in a sort of glorified haze ; and Mingo, their native servant, for once lost his balance and chattered with joy at the prospect of escaping another winter in England, and returning to the sun-scorched but splendid East.

The Northwoods gave a farewell dinner-party before leaving London to as many of their friends as their lodgings in Wellington Street could comfortably accommodate. Mingo had been busy the whole day cooking all sorts of diabolical messes, which were hailed with enthusiasm by the exiles from the Straits. All the gentlemen had some sherry and bitters before dinner. They had some more sherry with their mulligatawny, a red-hot soup which brought tears to Johnnie's eyes. Some excellent fish served chiefly as a pretext for iced hock ; some of the guests drank claret with the cutlets which followed, but the curries and *sambals* were *the* great feature of the feast. Everybody beamed with satisfaction at the piles of snowy rice, and the endless varieties of fish, flesh and fowl artistically curried, and giving forth the most aromatic and appetizing odours. There were *sambals* in great abundance ; red fish from the Straits of Macassar ; salt fish from Siam ; salted eggs from China ; *kropoks*, or delightful biscuits made from a sort of flour of prawns, which came from Java ; " Bombay ducks " from Bombay ; *blachan* from Malacca, and chutnies from all over India. Mr. John Small sniffed the ambient air greedily, and remarked to his son, an absurdly youthful and precise reproduction of himself, that only Captain and Mrs. Northwood were capable of providing their friends in London with such a magnificent dinner.

Captain Lugard was positively watering at the mouth, as he muttered that this was his first happy hour since he left Bolongan—which happens to be somewhere in Borneo. Mr. Valberg, the Senior Magistrate, who was always so very careful about his dignity, rubbed his hands in a sort of unholy glee, and nearly scared young Valentine Valberg into a fit. Dr. Macleod, a splendidly handsome

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man, could scarce control the workings of his massive features. Mrs. Skinner, stout and spiteful, nodded genially to her son Georgie, and urged him to have a good time of it, and be sure to enjoy himself, and that gentle youth, who had already been stuffing himself, felt thereby encouraged to fresh efforts. The whole length of the crowded table was in a state of animation seldom seen at a dinner-party.

Captain Northwood was quite in his element at the head of the table. Few things delighted him more than entertaining his friends in the largest numbers possible. His stentorian voice was heard imploring his most distant guests to have a little of this or of that, or telling the hired waiters to fill a glass here or there. He set the example of drinking pale ale with his rice and curry, and certainly, as the carefully cooled amber ale creamed in a thin glass goblet, it seemed both seductive and appropriate as a beverage for palates set aflame with chillies, peppers, and all sorts of spices. Nearly every one took pale ale with the only course of the evening worth thinking about, but there were exceptions. Old Mrs. Crabbe, the widow of an Indian colonel, who departed this life while Johnnie was still a baby, and her exceedingly pretty niece, Clara Campbell, both drank water. "Ah, Johnnie!" said the old lady, "if ever you get to be as old as I am, you will find there is nothing like cold water for such a meal as this. You don't find the natives taking pale ale with *their* rice and curry, and surely they ought to know something of it." Mr. Sprawle, sometime Assistant Resident of one of the Native States, and at present an explorer on his own account, was apparently of the same opinion, for he also drank water, but was evidently enjoying himself in his quiet way. Pretty Mrs. Fanny Dawson—whose husband was supposed to be doing something or other in Singapore—started with pale ale, but when her neighbour pressed her to take champagne instead, she made no objection, and drank it out of a tumbler.

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At last the rice and curry business was over, and the array of heathen dishes was taken away to be replaced by a delicious display of choice fruits. Said old Mrs. Crabbe to her niece, "Clara, my pet! you may have a glass of champagne with your fruit. We're as poor as crows, and 'Simkin' doesn't come our way very often."

At a signal from the hostess the ladies retired with her to the drawing-room. Captain Lugard, with a sigh of relief, called for a brandy and soda, and with feverish haste commenced to light his pipe, a small, black, charred and chipped old meerschaum, which he invariably smoked upside down. Puffing clouds of smoke and scattering ashes liberally all over the place, the Captain took repeated pulls at his long tumbler of grog, and was completely happy. The other men, with more decorum, smoked Manila cheroots; a few of them took to brandy and soda, others preferred claret, while Johnnie observed with respectful amazement that Mr. John Small elected to top off with port wine. Northwood suggested that Lugard and Johnnie should have a chat in the garden—the fact being that he wanted to get rid of both of them. Valberg and Small found that they had no present occasion for the society of their sons, and sent them off to the garden also, together with the young scapegrace Dickie Smithers, Mrs. Crabbe's nephew. Captain Lugard re-loaded and lit his horrible pipe, had his glass refilled, and clasping it in his hand calmly shambled through the drawing-room to the garden. As the door closed behind him, Northwood said: "Lugard is an awfully decent fellow, and very generous with his dollars if anybody happens to want some of them, but off the quarter-deck of his old barque he is a bit of a nuisance. He'll be half-seas over before he thinks of going home to-night." Everybody concurred, and everybody thought of the piles of money that Lugard made out of his gutta-percha trade.

As Johnnie and his friends entered the drawing-room, his mother had just risen from the piano—she had been

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singing one or two of her pretty songs, to which no one made any pretence of listening.

Fat Mrs. Skinner made room for her on the sofa, and taking her by the hand, whispered in a particularly audible tone: "So Mrs. Crabbe and that niece of hers have new dresses on to-night! What size cheque did the old campaigner take out of your husband?" Mrs. Northwood said "Hush!" Poor Mrs. Crabbe, in a new but cheap black dress, turned uneasily in her chair, and Clara Campbell, looking deliciously pretty in white muslin and blue ribbons, blushed crimson, while the tears started to her magnificent dark eyes.

Johnnie, much distressed at this incident, hurried his friends into the garden, where Captain Lugard, settling himself and his long brandy and soda on an iron seat, soon had the lads interested in the oft-told story of how he and his sailors stormed the Sultan of Bolongan's palace. The yarn set Johnnie's pulses beating again, while Dickie Smithers begged Lugard to take him into his service. The old skipper emptied his tumbler and said he would think about it. "Mind you!" he said, "there's other work to do besides storming palaces, as you'll jolly well find out if you come with me." Then, turning to Johnnie, he said, "I'm sorry your father is going to put you into a beastly office. You are cut out for working on the Borneo coast; though after all, now that your dad has gone in for a damn steamer instead of the good old sailing-ships which made his money, it perhaps doesn't matter so much."

Dickie Smithers declared that it was a settled thing that he would go to sea with Captain Lugard, and crowed over the other youngsters, whom he called milksops and landlubbers, until the old skipper shut him up with a forcible remark which need not be repeated.

Presently other people began to flock into the garden, and in some way or another Johnnie found that he had paired off with Clara Campbell, whom he found to be more charming every minute he spent in her society. Dr.

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Macleod and Mrs. Fanny Dawson also went round the gravelled paths together. They talked in low tones, and the lady laughed a good deal at what was being said to her.

Upon Mrs. Crabbe's arrival to take possession of her niece, Johnnie went back to the drawing-room, where he found Mrs. Skinner pursuing her favourite amusement with great vivacity. She had just been making some very scandalous remarks to Mrs. Northwood and Mrs. Valberg about Dr. Macleod and Mrs. Dawson. Upon Johnnie's appearance she went upon another tack, and said to him: "So you are going to be a lady-killer, like your father! But *do* be careful about unmarried girls, or they will get you into no end of trouble. A young man of your position should marry a fortune and a title as well, so don't you get yourself mixed up with a common flirt like Clara!"

Mrs. Northwood begged Mrs. Skinner not to talk nonsense to Johnnie, who would have to work for his living like anybody else, and marry some nice, sensible girl when he was old enough to understand such things.

Mrs. Valberg, who was supposed to be almost half-witted on account of her knack of looking into space while she said things which, on the whole, were rather sensible, now gazed fixedly at the ceiling and began talking to herself in the following strain: "Clara is very pretty, and she is a good, clever, managing girl, who has been taught the value of every penny. He will be a lucky man who gets Clara. Johnnie Northwood is a very nice lad, but he's none too good for Clara. If he has money enough for two, why should he want more? and however rich he may become, what's the good of a wife with a title to him if he hasn't got one himself? It will be many a long year before my poor Valentine can think of marrying, but I wish I could live to see him settled down with a wife like Clara. And I believe in early marriages."

Mrs. Skinner could hardly keep back her pent-up feelings during this little speech, and Johnnie thought it about

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time he made his escape, so he ran into the garden, where he was promptly captured by Dr. Macleod, who wanted to have a chat with him.

"So, my bonnie boy," he said, "I've got you at last, have I? How do you like Mrs. Skinner? A really great institution, isn't she? No tiffin or dinner-party is complete without her. She is as indispensable as the pepper, the ginger, and the chillies in a curry paste, and like them she brings tears to a good many people's eyes. Man! it's a sad, demoralizing thing is curry! Look at us all tonight. We were comparatively decent folk when we arrived here, but we were led astray by that artfully compounded mulligatawny at the very commencement. The plain-boiled fish and the cutlets restored us for a few brief minutes to some kind of respectability, but what a downfall there was when the rice and the curries and those delicious *sambals*, cooked by that devil Mingo, were handed round! Original sin oozed out of us at every pore. I noted you at the table, Johnnie! Your eyes were starting out of your head, you thought you had a live coal in your mouth instead of a tongue, and the wame of ye was just glowing hot. It was after that prawn-curry, you remember. No human being can pretend to eat a prawn-curry and remain virtuous. Prawn-curry has been the moral and physical ruin of hundreds, ay! of thousands of both sexes in the Far East. But after a glass of pale ale, your burning tongue was cooled, and the pain you felt became a sense of piquant but pleasant voluptuousness. Ye began to feel good all over, you young villain, and your eyes, instead of glaring into nothingness, just became brilliant as they gazed gratefully on the charming person of Miss Clara Campbell. You would have proposed to her this very night with half a chance! Curried prawns, indeed! I happen to know something about them myself. If I had asked Mrs. Fanny Dawson to run off with me just now, I doubt she would have declined the honest proposal. But, fortunately for myself and others, I've come straight from my

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wife and family in Edinburgh, and the virtues recently inhaled on my native soil were just strong enough to hold me back on the verge of the precipice. Now that we've enjoyed a nice two-handed crack, let us go to the dining-room and see what your father and the rest of them are doing. I'll go bail they're sitting up to their necks in some precious scheme to make a few more dollars."

The Doctor was quite right. Northwood was settled at the head of the table, with Sprawle on one side of him and Valberg on the other. John Small and Lugard formed the rest of the party. All had paper and pencil before them, and were so deep in their business that Lugard had actually let his pipe go out, and forgotten to empty his long tumbler. Sprawle had found a tin-mine in the Native States and got a concession for it. The thing looked well enough, and so a small syndicate was being formed to float a company to work the *Pusing Orang Mines*. Sprawle was to exploit the property, Valberg took over the financial and business management of the whole affair, while Northwood, Small, and Lugard agreed to find the required capital. All these details having been settled, the little meeting rose, and Northwood and his friends adjourned to the drawing-room. With the freedom of manner permitted by a very long and intimate acquaintance, Northwood patted Mrs. Skinner on her vast bare shoulders as he said, "Now, my dear Mrs. Skinner, how goes the *School for Scandal*? 'A character dead at every word,' as usual, I suppose, while no one has so much as a thought for poor Skinner slaving away from morning to night in Singapore."

"Keep your paws to yourself, you horrid sailor-man!" shrieked Mrs. Skinner, who could never forget that she had once been a buxom but captivating pink-and-white beauty. She had been, and still would be, as arrant a flirt as Mrs. Dawson, or any of the other ladies of her social circle, and was never happy out of men's society. Poor Captain Skinner had married her for her prettiness many

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a long year since, and had had ample leisure in which to repent himself of his bargain.

"What have you been doing in the dining-room all the evening?" continued Mrs. Skinner. "Talking business, indeed! Getting up some pretty plan for robbing the widow and the orphan, you mean!"

While Captain Northwood and Mrs. Skinner were fighting their battle, the clock sounded the hour of midnight. Mr. Small told Thomas it was high time he was in bed, while Mrs. Valberg sagaciously remarked to the carpet that one could really have too much of a good thing, and that a sound sleep was better than any amount of idle conversation. The signal being given for the breaking-up of the party, the guests took their departure in groups, and left the Northwoods to their meditations on the events of the evening.

The group of Singapore friends gathered together at Wellington Street on this occasion were really very honest and very nice people in their own way. Accustomed to live as members of one great family in the open and extraordinarily genial surroundings of the Singapore of that day, they were never really at home or completely happy in London, where they were chilled by restraints and conventions of which they recked little in free and sunny Singapore. When they were back there they always spoke affectionately of England as "Home"; but the place they really loved with all their heart was the little island in the Straits of Malacca. Men like Northwood, Lugard, Small and Valberg did much to increase the trade and influence of Singapore on purely British lines. They would have been horrified to think that they were labouring to improve the commerce of what was to become a German colony for all practical purposes. However, such sad considerations concerning a remote future gave no trouble at Wellington Street.

Johnnie was putting away his mother's music for her, when he looked wistfully at a very highly coloured view

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of Venice illustrating a sentimental song, and said: "I should like to go to Venice!"

"Venice, indeed!" his mother retorted. "Well, I suppose you *will* go to Venice some day, if you set your heart on it, but really your voyage to Singapore ought to be enough to satisfy you for the time being."

Johnnie went to Venice all right in later days, just as he found his way to many other places he wanted to see. Incidentally he managed to get himself into some of the most undesirable and dangerous spots of the earth. He had trouble enough before him to daunt the stoutest heart and try the strongest nerve; but, fortunately for Johnnie, he knew nothing of his dark future, and indulged incessantly in rosy dreams.

When Northwood and his wife retired to their room they talked over the young lads present at the evening's entertainment. There was no difficulty about forecasting the future for Thomas Small or Valentine Valberg. Both were carefully educated, precise, and particularly smug young men, who would do exactly what was expected of them. Thomas would keep his father's big store in the Square, and Valentine would conscientiously follow his father's footsteps in the legal profession and ultimately become a magistrate. The career of Dickie Smithers also seemed to lay itself open before the experienced eyes of Northwood, who had detected beneath the gaiety and attractiveness of the handsome young fellow the vicious propensities which had wrecked his father.

"Tommy and Valentine are all right in their own small way," he said. "They will give no trouble to anybody, and succeed their fathers without having a tithe of their fathers' brains or their geniality. Dickie Smithers will come to no good!"

Subsequent events justified Northwood's forecast in every detail. As for poor Dickie Smithers, finding service with Captain Lugard very slow, he ultimately made his way to the coast of China, where he led such a rapid existence

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that he outran the constable, until the constable in his turn outran Dickie and cast him into jail, which was precisely the fate which Mrs. Skinner had been prophesying for him almost as soon as he could toddle.

Meanwhile Northwood had anxious thoughts about his own curly-pated Johnnie.

“He is a dear, good, affectionate boy!” explained Mrs. Northwood.

“Yes!” rejoined his father. “Johnnie is good at heart, thank God! and he is clever, high-spirited, and plucky—too much so, in fact, for his abilities are hardly of the right sort for success nowadays, and his courage will get him into trouble. He wants ballast, and it will take a terrific lot of licking to get him into shape. He will get it too, poor chap!”

Mrs. Northwood sighed, and her anxious fears kept her awake until nearly daylight.

Meanwhile Johnnie's slumbers were nothing like so tranquil as usual. He was dreaming dreams of battles in Borneo, of moonlit nights in Venice, of curried prawns of unusual dimensions—and of Clara Campbell!

CHAPTER VII

EN ROUTE FOR SINGAPORE

AFTER idling pleasantly about Normandy, the Northwoods took up their quarters in Paris for a time.

Then they found their way to Mâcon for no other reason than that the Captain took it into his head to go there to buy a stock of Burgundy for his cellars in Singapore. The Mâcon district was found to be a land of plenty, brimming over with good wine and good things in general, and a smiling country withal.

Johnnie proposed that the journey to Lyons should be made by one of the river steamers instead of by the horrid, prosaic railway, an idea which was gleefully hailed by his father. So Johnnie negotiated with the skipper of one of the boats which load with wine from Mâcon to Lyons to take the Northwood family as passengers. Of course, there was no accommodation for passengers on board the little craft, the decks of which were piled high with casks of wine, but the Frenchmen looked on the whole affair as a huge joke, while the Northwoods entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing. The river voyage was a pure delight; the fricassee of chicken deftly cooked in a miniature galley by a black-bearded member of the crew was almost too good to be true, and Johnnie thought that the new, fizzy wine drawn from one of the casks on deck was much nicer than the expensive stuff in bottles.

The Northwoods, having viewed the whirling waters at the junction of the Saone and the Rhone, arrived safely at the great city of Lyons, where they were most hospitably entertained by a French family to whom they had had the opportunity of showing some attention in London.

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After a very agreeable stay at Lyons, the Northwoods took the train to Marseilles. Here they had secured exceedingly comfortable and spacious apartments in the house of a French family, thanks to the introductions of their friends at Lyons. The Captain promptly declared that he did not particularly care how long he stayed at Marseilles, and straightway advised the Messageries Maritimes' agents that he intended to defer his departure.

"We'll make the best use we can of the last days of our holiday," he would declare of a morning, and certainly, being favoured as they were with beautiful weather, our pilgrims had a splendid time of it. They went on all sorts of excursions to quaint places, where the natives, instead of robbing their English visitors, would insist on giving them an excellent meal and as much wine as they wanted for two or three francs per head.

Master Johnnie was desirous that they should all avail themselves of the present opportunity to pay a visit to Monte Carlo, but his father did not particularly care about the idea, while his mother would not hear of her boy going anywhere near such an iniquitous place. Johnnie had to content himself with the determination to see Monte Carlo for himself some other day, and it is hardly necessary to say that in the fullness of time, and after many wanderings, he got to Monte Carlo at last.

Then Captain Northwood took it into his head to do some shopping after his own fashion. First, he bought a couple of lovely marble statues of heathen female divinities, which, with their marble pedestals, cost a pot of money. He said they would do all right for the lower verandah of Woodleigh, his beautiful home in Singapore. Then he bought no end of marble slabs to pave the lower verandah, so that his statues should have a floor worthy of their magnificence. He purchased next marble friezes and all sorts of things for the beautification of Woodleigh. Then he started buying bulbs and seeds, and packed up whole cases of roots and vines for his garden in Singapore, which

En route for Singapore

comprised many acres. Finally, he said that by the time freight and charges and things were paid for, he had spent enough money and had better hurry back to Singapore to see about getting some of it back!

So, one fine morning, the Northwoods left Marseilles by the M. M. steamer *Mekong*, bound for the glorious Far East.

The voyage was to Johnnie a prolonged and magnificent picnic on a huge yacht. It was a lovely steamer, thronged by delightful people. There were a number of sturdy Ceylon planters amongst the passengers, who were Johnnie's especial admiration. There were pretty young ladies also, with some of whom the lad fell simultaneously in love, in spite of his passion for Clara Campbell. Athletic sports, dances on deck, and scratch concerts passed the time very pleasantly.

During the voyage from Marseilles to Aden, Johnnie had many delightful talks with his father as they paced the quarter-deck together. Captain Northwood tried to give his son "points" as to what he was to do when he reached Singapore. Johnnie learned that Woodleigh was rented to Sir Henry Neville, the Chief Justice, and that as Sir Henry's lease had some months yet to run, arrangements had been made for the Northwood family to live with their intimate friends the Hallidays, at Greenbanks, until Woodleigh was vacated.

Captain Northwood was careful to impress on the mind of his son that Sir Henry Neville was one of the best of men, while Mrs. Northwood, with an outlook on the social side of things, told Johnnie that Lady Neville was very young, very beautiful, and very fascinating. Mrs. Northwood was anxious that Johnnie should stand well with Lady Neville, and thus get an *entrée* into the best of Singapore society.

There was a passenger on board the *Mekong*, a certain William Johnson, a lad of Johnnie's own age, and of much the same venturesome and light-hearted disposition. He

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was a good-looking fellow, and, like Johnnie, was a six-footer ; but there the resemblance ended. Unlike Johnnie, who had a wealthy father to look after him, William Johnson made no bones about it that "his cheek was his fortune," and that he was going out to try his luck in Singapore because his prospects at home were so exceptionally poor. Captain Northwood was pleased to see a friendship growing up between the two young men, because it was easy to see that William Johnson was an honest, vigorous young fellow, with no nonsense about him. It was better that Johnnie should have a penniless lad of this stamp for his friend than some of the other young men of Singapore, who had more money to spend than was good for them.

So Johnnie Northwood and William Johnson used to spend their time in "jawing" to each other, or reading one another's books, when they were not sky-larking all over the decks and making themselves something of a nuisance to the other passengers.

Aden, however, was the scene of a complete change in Johnnie's condition. The Northwood party went ashore, looked at the Arabs and their strings of camels, explored the rubbishy little shops, and drove out to see the wonderful tanks hewn out of the solid rock. As there had not been a drop of rain in Aden for something like seven years, the tanks were absolutely empty, and could be seen in all their magnitude. After a shocking bad dinner at an hotel of sorts kept by a Greek, the party got back to the *Mekong*, all of them feeling tired out by a day spent under the blazing sun of Aden. Next day, the *Mekong* was at sea again, but Johnnie Northwood, who had some difficulty in getting on deck, was listless and clearly very unwell. The ship's doctor sent him to bed, and after a certain time it was discovered that he was down with typhoid fever.

A mail steamer is no place for a man suffering from a raging fever, and the ship's doctor was no wizard at his trade. So Johnnie Northwood went from bad to worse.

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By the time the steamer got to Colombo he was delirious and, naturally, saw nothing of Ceylon.

At last, in the early days of December, 1875, the *Mekong* arrived at Singapore. Johnnie appeared to be by this time at the last extremity. He was carried ashore, and put into a carriage, in which he was driven to Greenbanks. For the next few weeks the lad was struggling for his life. "The wind of Death's imperishable wing" was, to all appearances, quietly fanning him to his grave. The anguish of his father and mother during this terrible time was unspeakable. Had they brought their only son to Singapore to die? Every care was lavished on him, and good old Dr. Small did his best with a case which sorely puzzled the worthy man, until finally the lad's magnificent constitution triumphed, and as soon as he was able to be moved his father and mother hired a bungalow by the sea at Passir Panjang, and devoted all their energies to nursing him back to health and strength.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMENCEMENT OF A CAREER

IT was but a shadow of the Johnnie Northwood of former days who returned from the bungalow at Passir Panjang to his temporary home at Greenbanks. There he found himself in very delightful surroundings. Greenbanks was a vast rambling house of colonnades and verandahs, standing on the top of a hill and surrounded by acres of grounds.

The great commodious pile of buildings was not more attractive than its inmates. The Hallidays were altogether delightful people. The widowed, white-haired Mrs. Halliday was the most charming and the wisest of old ladies. Her son-in-law, Alexander Melville, quiet, dignified, and gifted with a discreetly veiled sense of humour, was one of Captain Northwood's best friends. Mrs. Melville was quite as clever and companionable as her husband. James Halliday, a lad of twenty years of age, with bright red hair, was full of gaiety and high spirits, and had (it must be added) a terrible propensity for getting into mischief.

The other inmate of Greenbanks was John Grinston, a sturdy young man twenty-five years of age, with strongly-marked features, and a character to match his physique. His history was one of unmerited suffering and reproach, endured with silent and sullen courage. His father, one of the skippers of the ancient days, had died penniless in Singapore while his son was yet a mere child. Put into Raffles School because it was cheap, young Grinston was educated amidst half-castes

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and native boys. At "Raffles" he managed to learn all about reading, writing and arithmetic, if not much else, and when he had to leave the school and was thrown on his own resources, he eked out a miserable existence as a clerk in the Police Court, and subsequently in the Harbour Master's office. Attached to him was the odium of being what is called "a country born," a regular millstone round his neck. True, Johnnie Northwood had also been born in Singapore; but, then, he had been educated in England, and was the son of a popular and notoriously wealthy man, circumstances which made all the difference. Still John Grinston struggled doggedly under his handicap in life, and exhibited a great capacity for work wherever he was employed.

At last the turning-point came in his seemingly hopeless existence. Partly through Captain Northwood's good offices, and chiefly because George Carlyle, managing partner of Brownlow's Singapore house and an intimate friend of the Captain, knew a good workman when he saw him, John Grinston actually got a clerkship in Brownlow and Company's service. At this crisis in his career John Grinston subdued his stubborn pride to the extent of asking Captain Northwood to lend him sufficient money to enable him to keep up the respectable appearance necessary to a man on the Brownlow staff. Naturally Northwood lent the money and thought no more about it. Grinston did very well at Brownlow's, and at the earliest moment possible insisted on paying back his debt to Northwood plus interest. Northwood was much annoyed at Grinston's insistence about paying interest, and they nearly had a quarrel on the point; but, as usual, Grinston had his way, and was free to consider that Northwood had rendered him no service whatever since he had been repaid with interest. It was Grinston's way!

Now, although Grinston was doing exceedingly well in the Singapore branch, the home office never liked his appointment. Grinston had got into their service in an

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unusual manner, and had not been drafted out from London in the regular course. It was finally decided, and unjustly decided on the mere merits of the case, that John Grinston should be dismissed. Unhappily, the London letter conveying John Grinston's dismissal, also announced that Mr. John Dillon Northwood would shortly leave London to join the Singapore staff. Grinston, whose appreciation of his own value was something inordinate, immediately made up his mind that he had been cleared out of the road to make room for young Northwood at his father's instigation. The Captain endeavoured to explain that his son's appointment was but the fulfilment of Jasper Mackenzie's ancient promise, but while Grinston appeared to accept the explanation, he would have none of it in his own mind, and hated Johnnie accordingly. And John Grinston was the worst of good haters. He continually chewed the cud of bitter thoughts about the Northwoods. It is a long lane which has no turning, and Grinston made up his mind that if ever he could get even with the Northwoods he would do so at the first chance.

His dismissal from Brownlow's really laid the foundation of his fortune, for after serving a few years with another firm he was in a position to start in business on his own account with great success under the style of Grinston & Co. In after years he became quite a celebrity in Singapore.

It was no part of Grinston's present plan to quarrel openly with the Northwoods, and as he had an almost complete control over his features and his actions, none suspected his real feelings. In the meantime, the Northwoods, both father and son, were attracted by his grit and his affectation of simple but solid worth. Grinston was great at cricket, football and other athletic sports, and this alone was quite enough to endear him to Johnnie Northwood.

His son now being on the high road to recovering his

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usual health and vigour, Captain Northwood busied himself in his spare moments with unpacking the carriages built for him by one of the most fashionable shops in Long Acre. Then he had to buy horses for his carriages, plant out his vines and things in the grounds of Woodleigh. So altogether he was once more a busy and a happy man.

One fine afternoon Mrs. Northwood drove Johnnie to Woodleigh, to pay his first visit to Lady Neville, and incidentally to get a glimpse of his future home. Johnnie was simply delighted with the magnificent long avenue leading up to Woodleigh, its beautiful lawns and lovely trees, while the house itself on the summit of the gently rising ground appeared to be quite palatial in its own way.

Lady Neville's reception was attended by no small contingent of the "nobility and gentry" of Singapore. Numbers of exceedingly important gentlemen and very fashionable ladies promenaded the lawn. Occasionally some of them would accept a cup of tea or other of the refreshments provided at convenient tables, served by picturesque natives.

After a very gracious reception by Lady Neville and a pleasant little chat with Sir Henry, Johnnie thought he was at liberty to see something of Woodleigh. At the very end of the lawn was a singularly beautiful tree of huge dimensions. Johnnie's attention was drawn to it by the fact that some of the leaves appeared to be glued together in a peculiar way. His mother explained to him that these were red ants' nests, which ought to be burnt out, and urged him not to go near the tree, because red ant bites are terribly painful things in their way.

Shortly after this warning, Johnnie had the honour of an introduction to that exceedingly important personage, the Hon'ble Granville Brendor, the Attorney-General for the Straits Settlements, etc., etc., etc. To his

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astonished gaze the important Mr. Brendor appeared to consist chiefly of a very large grey top-hat, a very large face, a large frock-coat, worn so as to display an unusually large expanse of shirt-front and white waistcoat, and a pair of diminutive shepherd's-plaid trousers, terminated by a pair of tiny, varnished boots. Johnnie thought he was the most absolutely top-heavy gentleman he had ever seen.

The great Mr. Brendor, after carefully scrutinizing Johnnie through his eye-glass, condescendingly remarked that the tree at the end of the lawn was a very fine one, of an unusual species, which he would fain examine more closely. Johnnie mumbled a warning about red ants, and said something about, "Don't go there, sir!"

Mr. Brendor looked at Johnnie, much as Goliath at David, and resolutely followed his lone star to the foot of the tree. A few seconds afterwards the unhappy gentleman was seen sprinting across the lawn at a speed quite unusual for an Attorney-General, what time he plucked at his garments in a manner bordering on the unseemly. Tearing wildly down the avenue, Mr. Brendor singled out his equipage near the head of the long file of carriages, and after roaring out a hoarse order to his syce, plunged into the depths of his vehicle, which was what is known in Singapore as a "palanquin," a sort of glorified box on wheels, with shutters which let up and down. Before the syce could extricate his palanquin from the rank, down slammed one of the shutters and out flew a large grey top-hat, followed at a brief interval by a frock-coat and an extra size of a white shirt, which a playful breeze carried partly across the lawn. When, however, a pair of very short shepherd's-plaid breeks were flung out after the shirt, the situation was too much for the company assembled on the lawn. Johnnie laughed outright, to the great displeasure of his mother, though she was sorely tempted to laugh herself.

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The unfortunate Attorney-General was simply swarming with red ants, and maddened with the acrid stings of the horrid insects. Their bite is just like having a red-hot needle plunged into the flesh, causing a pain which is unendurable. What the Attorney-General looked like when he reached home and had to get out of his palanquin can only be conjectured; but it must have taken him all his time to look dignified in such remarkable circumstances.

Next morning early, Captain Northwood, putting down his telescope, told Johnnie that his steamer, the *Alastor*, was signalled, and suggested they should go to meet her. A pleasant drive in the cool morning air took them to Johnston's Pier, and they were soon afloat in one of the comfortable long sampans, pulling four oars.

"That is the *Alastor*!" said Northwood, and Johnnie saw a long black steamer lying so low in the water that he thought she must be sinking. But his father laughed, and said she had a full cargo on board and a bit over. Sampans and lighters swarmed round the steamer, whose decks were crowded by a mob of people whose main business appeared to be to run about shrieking and making a noise. The native passengers were, for the most part, possessors of pets, such as a Borneo sunbear, a monkey, a parrot, or a goat, which got in everybody's way and added to the general clamour.

Finally, the Northwoods got alongside the ship's ladder and gained the quarter-deck, where alone was there some semblance of order. Captain Hall made a short verbal report of the voyage. The five European passengers had already gone ashore, but hoped that Captain Northwood would meet them at tiffin-time at the Hôtel de l'Europe. The *Alastor* had shut out three thousand bags of sago-flour at Labuan, and about a hundred bullocks, as a deck-load of rattans and rubber paid a better freight than cattle, and left more room for native passengers.

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At this point in his recital Captain Hall was interrupted by the dreadful yells of three very black men with hardly any clothing, who were trying to force their way past the serang and his satellites to the quarter-deck. They were the expectant consignees of the bullocks left behind at Labuan, and, very naturally, feeling disappointed, they began to howl after the manner of their kind, and to curse most horribly the ship, the serang thereof, the captain, the owner, and their wives and daughters.

The din these fellows made was intolerable, until Northwood, looking round hastily, set eyes on a suitable instrument of correction, which happened to be a belaying pin. He walked up to the yelling group, and bidding them begone for immoral sons of unmentionable mothers, he dealt them out a few smart raps with his weapon. Whereupon the black men speedily shut up and slunk into their sampan.

Northwood told Johnnie that he strongly disapproved of striking natives, but that there was only one way of getting rid of Klings whose cargo had been shut out, and that was to hit them over the head. Otherwise the sooty villains would go howling up and down the ship all day long.

After this little interlude all hands were piped to breakfast. The quarter-deck breakfast was most excellent of its kind. Such delicacies as "country captain" and "black duck" are beyond praise, albeit considerably more pungent in flavour than most dishes. The *Alastor's* curries were famous, while some fragrant and juicy Labuan pomeloes made an elegant finish to a meal which erred a little on the side of redundancy. Then Captain Northwood, having lit up his Manila cheroot, sent for Cassim, to have a look at "Baba Johnnie."

Yes! it was undoubtedly the same honest and cheery Cassim, looking hardly a day older, who used to tell fairy-tales and pirate stories to a certain little boy on board

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the *Samson*; but Cassim could scarce believe that the young fellow, who stood as high, inch for inch, as his father, was the pet child of the olden days. Cassim was bidden to come to Greenbanks that evening to see something more of "Baba Johnnie."

Captain Hall then deferentially intimated that Mr. McCracken, the chief engineer, would fain have a word in private.

"Send him along!" roared Northwood. "I suppose he wants new engines and boilers as usual!"

The "chief" came along and wished to detain the *Alastor* a few days to tinker up his engines.

"Rot!" shouted Northwood, as he peeled off his coat and dived into the engine-room, from which growling sounds, suggesting a fight in a bear-pit, arose for the next ten minutes. Then the two men emerged from the nether regions, and Northwood said very emphatically to McCracken: "Mind you! I don't grudge the money, but I can't spare the time. Do what you like with your repairs, but the *Alastor* sails at noon on Saturday, and if you can't run the engines I'll do it myself!"

He gave a comprehensive look round the ship's decks, which by this time had been cleared of passengers, monkeys and parrots, and no inconsiderable lot of rattans and rubber. The hatches were all off, and the steam winches rattling away for all they were worth with slings of sago-flour, while the tindals kept up their monotonous chant of *satu, dua, tiga*.

"Get her out as soon as you can, Captain Hall; there is enough cargo waiting to load us twice over, and don't forget you sail at noon on Saturday to the minute!"

Thus saying, Northwood told his son to jump into the long boat and look lively, and they were soon on their way back to Johnston's Pier. They seated themselves comfortably in the boat beneath the awning, and North-

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wood remarked, between puffs at his cheroot: "You see, Johnnie, it takes some savvy to run a trade like this! Hall is a pretty good and safe skipper, but he has always got one eye on the square of the main-hatch, and has none too much grit in him. Not the man to *make* a trade. I think I know pretty well to a dollar what he makes for himself, though he doesn't think so. I'll let him know about it one of these days. Then there's that Chinese thief, Ah Ling, the *chinchew*, making another fortune out of me. But he is so jolly smart and useful I can't do without him, and he knows it. Never a package missing with Mr. Ah Ling, and the way he collects freights is a wonder. McCracken is a good 'chief,' or I wouldn't keep him, but if he had his way the *Alastor* would make about two trips a year, while he was engraving and gilding his blasted engines. Why don't I put on another steamer? Well, I suppose I shall have to some day, but I have got things so anchored down on the Borneo side that I need fear no competition as yet, and sometimes one steamer pays better than two! The *Alastor* is a bonny boat, my boy, and, what's more, she pays her way and a bit over!"

As the *Alastor* had covered her cost price within the first twelvemonth and left a nice balance over, she was, indeed, "a bonny boat." Northwood had bought her for a mere song, and at the present moment she was bringing in to her fortunate owner something like nine thousand pounds per annum clear.

With all his apparent lavishness and indifference to small economies, Northwood was careful to live within one-third of this amount, and yet enjoy life to the top of his bent. And he had other irons in the fire. He had investments in Borneo which brought him in a round twelve per cent. per annum. He had bought up all the best properties in Labuan, and was now sagaciously putting money into landed property in Singapore, which was constantly and rapidly improving.

The *Alastor* was a really wonderful packet. Johnnie

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noticed the following inscription on her big steering wheel aft :

ALASTOR,
1856.
Liverpool.

Johnnie was born in 1856, so it was an easy matter for him to calculate that the *Alastor* was then something over twenty years of age, the reason why his father had picked her up so cheap. True, he had to go to the expense of putting new boilers into her, but that was after she had paid for herself two or three times over. As a matter of fact, the *Alastor* was a mere chicken at twenty years of age, and was destined to do yet another twenty years of hard work, and to earn many a pile of money before her career was closed. But the iron steamers built in 1856 were very different from the flimsy steel structures of nowadays.

Originally designed for the Bilbao ore trade, the *Alastor* was built of heavy iron plates with frames twelve inches apart. Then Alfred Holt cut her in two, lengthened her, put his own system of tandem engines into the vessel and sent her out from Liverpool to China *viâ* the Cape.

The *Alastor*, if facts have been correctly stated, was the pioneer of that enormous fleet under Holt's flag, which must be valued at some millions sterling to-day. With the opening of the Suez Canal, and the revolution in modern tonnage, the *Alastor* was hopelessly out of date for long voyages, and being old and with boilers which were shaky enough, she naturally went cheap to the man who had the pluck to buy her. Northwood knew Alfred Holt personally, and there was quite a pleasant friendship established between the great shipowner and the Singapore skipper. The *Alastor* was a pretty vessel of the old-fashioned type, with a clipper bow and fine run-aft. She was heavily masted and sparrred,

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quite like a sailing ship, to the immense satisfaction of Northwood.

Johnnie thought over all these things more than enough. His father was a rich man, and what sort of start in life had he to favour him? The whole of the Northwood estate and business was developed out of a small condemned revenue cutter, with a mainsail smaller than a large tablecloth. Then there was that phenomenal Holt's Line. Was that not built up out of the *Alastor*, the very steamer which his father now owned? Why should there not be a "Northwood Line," extending its tentacles over the Far East and monopolizing a huge freight trade of fabulous profits, and world-wide renown? In such mischievous meditations did Johnnie, with his easily fired imagination, employ the hours of his enforced idleness as a convalescent.

Captain Northwood was, indeed, wise in his generation. He knew intuitively that for one man who succeeds in the Napoleonic scale of business, hundreds come to grief, and was abundantly satisfied with his generous and comfortable measure of success. His son learned his lesson of moderation late in life, and a very expensive education it proved to be to himself and others.

At last Dr. Small pronounced Johnnie to be fit for work, and on one fine morning his father drove him in his smart Long-Acre phaeton to Brownlow's offices on Collyer Quay. During the drive Northwood said a little to his son about his future career. "I want you to leave ship-owning to me. I like you to take an intelligent interest in my affairs, but you've got to stick your spurs into the Brownlow business, and become a partner whenever you are fit for the position. I'll find the money to buy your partnership when the time comes, which won't be for some long years yet!"

Johnnie said nothing, but his father's programme seemed singularly distasteful to him. So he was to be a "beastly clerk" for goodness knows how many years, instead of

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running a superb steamship line of which he felt he could take charge to-morrow! It would be so much more natural to imitate his father, and console disappointed consignees by rapping them on the skull with a belaying-pin instead of squatting at a desk to write eternal letters, and copying out invoices and things. There was a want of breeziness about his long future which did not at all suit this clever young gentleman. However, he was much too fond of his father to run counter to his wishes, so he preserved a discreet silence, while he internally resolved to get out of Brownlow's directly he could see his way clear to starting that wonderful steamship-line.

Presently they walked up the big staircase leading to Brownlow's offices, and were very cordially received by George Carlyle. After a short chat Captain Northwood took his departure, and Johnnie seated himself at a desk which had been got ready for him. That day he did nothing but watch his colleagues, who were really too busy to take much notice of him. At five p.m. a tamby came to tell him that his mother wanted him, and as nobody else did, he was evidently free to do what he liked with himself.

He found that his mother had driven down in her landau, with the new pair of horses, to take him for a drive round the Esplanade, where they would no doubt be able to pick up his father. Thus terminated his first day as a business man in Singapore.

The next day by no means improved matters. One of the leading juniors of the office was Mr. William Wapshot, some time of Glasgow, a short, thick-set and thick-skinned young man, with a big bass voice to match the rest of his outfit.

Mr. Wapshot was a nailing good hand at his work, and tried to take charge of things accordingly. It occurred to him to take Northwood in hand and set him to fetch and carry for him. So he threw several sheets of china paper covered with writing in pencil on the lad's desk, and

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told him to make a fair copy of it, this being before the era of typewriting machines. Poor Johnnie did his best, but that best was bad—a dreadfully illegible scrawl, which nobody could possibly read but himself.

“What’s this?” growled Wapshot. “Hebrew by the looks of it! Weren’t you in some kind of office? Oh! a tea-broker’s! Ye’re sure it wasn’t a pawnbroker’s? What’s the good of pawnbroking or tea-broking in an office like this? My word! If Wintlebinnie and Co. saw a scratch like yon we’d lose their agency by the return mail, confound you! I’ll just write it out myself to save the Wintlebinnie connection.”

In a couple of minutes Mr. Wapshot was back at Johnnie’s desk with several enormous sheets of paper ruled into all sorts of forbidding columns, and once more took up the burden of his song.

“Since you’ve been in some sort of a broker’s office, perhaps ye can cipher if ye can’t write. Just set to and extend that manifest!”

The manifest, which had to be calculated in all sorts of strange weights, measures and currencies, was an utterly hopeless job. Johnnie did his utmost, but produced results which were sheer arithmetical nonsense to the experienced eye of Wapshot, to whom the conversion of piculs and catties into hundredweights, quarters, and pounds was mere child’s play. Wapshot gathered up the result of Johnnie’s work with a baleful grin, and carried it up to George Carlyle. In a beautiful mild bellow, which could be heard all over the office, Wapshot thus delivered himself:

“I don’t think much of Mister Northwood! Just look at his handwrite! And here’s what he makes of a manifest! He tells me that two-and-two is five, and that five per cent. on twenty shillings is eighteenpence! His father’s a rich man, they say! Why doesn’t he set up his son in a circus, or start him as a pawnbroker or something of the kind? What’s the good of him here?”

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Carlyle brushed the papers impatiently to one side, and told Wapshot to mind his own business and do his own work, instead of trying to push it on to young Northwood. The unabashed Wapshot picked up the papers in question, and as he passed Northwood's desk he favoured him with a deliberate and friendly wink!

Johnnie was absolutely dumbfounded at the proceedings of Mr. Wapshot. What were Mr. Chandler, Mr. Wooler, Mr. Dixon, and the other persons of Rood Lane, compared to a demon like this?

Captain Northwood made very light of his son's grievances that evening, and compared him to a young bear, whose troubles were yet to come.

The next day, about one o'clock, Carlyle said to him: "Come along and have your tiffin!" The tiffin-room was at the back of the office, amidst huge piles of Manchester bales on one side and great mounds of coffee on the other. The import and export departments met at this point. Once in the tiffin-room Northwood unpacked his lunch, which he had brought with him under the seat of his buggy in a tiffin-basket, a lacquered wooden thing, of two or three trays and a handle. The lunch itself consisted of some cold fowl, bread, cheese, and a banana. Carlyle's tiffin was even more simple, some soup in a small jar, and a bit of dry bread.

As they settled down to their meal Carlyle began to "draw" his young clerk about his past life. He learned that during his two years in the City, Johnnie had never so much as copied a letter or made out an invoice; that all he had done was to go round with samples, do some custom-house work, and cast out weight-notes.

"Well!" said Carlyle, "I suppose that since you left the Blue Coat School you must have cost your father at least three hundred pounds a year?"

Johnnie admitted that as a probable figure. "Take ten years at three hundred pounds a year," pursued Carlyle, "that makes three thousand pounds! And what

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has your father got for his money? Why, my dear boy, you can't even write!"

Seeing Johnnie looking very dejected, Carlyle told him to "buck up," not to mind what Wapshot or anyone else said, but just to go ahead and do his best and all would be well. He told Johnnie, too, that he might do worse than imitate his own handwriting. Now Carlyle wrote a singularly beautiful hand, clear and characteristic, evidently the writing of a man of qualities far above the average.

Johnnie felt greatly heartened and encouraged by his chief's considerate kindness and immediately took a great liking to him. From that time he filled up his spare hours with copying Carlyle's old letters from the press copy-books. He noted Carlyle's style of composition while he strove to write something like him. His colleagues used to laugh at him for what they considered a harmless form of lunacy; but in an amazingly short time Johnnie began to write a very legible and pretty hand, with some of Carlyle's style in it, but without so much character.

Wapshot soon spotted the new clerk's development, and promptly took him off copying old letters to making fair copies of his own drafts. There was awful trouble when one fine day young Northwood started criticizing Wapshot's drafting, and suggested that his subject matter could be better and more succinctly expressed in another way. Wapshot glared at him and bellowed at him, but Johnnie knew he was right and held his ground. After repeated rows, it was discovered that the "young duffer" had the gift of composition, which Wapshot certainly did not possess. Carlyle put an end to the situation by telling the indignant Wapshot that he had better just let Northwood know what he wanted to write about, and allow him to frame his letters in his own language.

Still Johnnie could not help feeling a bit of a fraud when he was paid his salary at the end of the month. Carlyle laughed merrily at this idea, and said; "Go it,

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my boy! I like your modesty! Mind you don't come prancing round some day saying that I don't pay you enough. I've known young men who've had the bad taste to do such a thing as that!"

Meanwhile Johnnie's physical education was proceeding considerably at Greenbanks. The household was astir by six a.m., and after a cup of tea, the whole force turned out for athletic sports under the management of Captain Northwood. Very fresh and sweet was the early morning air at Greenbanks before the intense heat of the day drove everybody under cover. John Grinston, James Halliday, Johnnie Northwood and William Johnson, who lived in an adjacent bungalow, would sprint for all they were worth barefooted over the grass. Or again they would compete with each other in long and high jumps. Captain Northwood entered heartily into such events as quoits, throwing the hammer, dumb-bell exercises, and swinging clubs, at which he was hard to beat. A couple of hours of this kind of work every morning soon got the young fellows very fit. After a refreshing cold bath and a good breakfast, the lot of them would drive to their offices for their day's work.

In the evening the young men would often amuse themselves with a rousing good bout at singlesticks, a pastime indulged in under somewhat peculiar conditions. It being much too hot to wear pads of any kind, the combatants stripped to their undervests and white trousers, their whole defensive armour consisting of an ordinary wire fencing-mask to protect their eyes and faces. Thus equipped, they laid into one another with more pluck than science.

The usual plan of the gladiators' programme was that Johnnie and Jimmy should each fight Grinston in turn, and then take it out of each other. William Johnson having tried his luck in two of these duels, vehemently declared that he was not going to be beaten black and blue to please anybody, and henceforth

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was an enthusiastic and interested spectator. It was Grinston who forced the fighting. He was at least five years older than either of his youthful antagonists, and was of a much heavier build, besides being as hard as nails through his constant training. The carefully concealed hatred of Grinston for both Johnnie and Jimmy found a safe outlet in singlesticks.

Grinston, taking advantage of his weight and muscle, simply tried to beat down the guard of the slender lads opposed to him in their turn, and then hammer them for all that his brute force was worth. Johnnie and Jimmy were speedily covered with huge weals and bruises at this game, but neither of them flinched for a moment. Johnnie's Blue Coat School education served him well when he stood up to be savagely punished by Grinston; and as for James Halliday, the more he was cut up the better he seemed to like it, and the wider the cheerful grin extended across his honest, freckled face. That was just sheer Scottish pluck in the case of James Halliday.

One particular trick of Grinston's neither of the lads could stand. The amiable fellow, after making one or two clumsy feints, took a vast pleasure in rapping a whistling cut at the unprotected ear of either of them. That was hard to bear, but after a while the boys got "up to trap," and soon learned to parry this particular cut. Then when Grinston left himself wide open, either Johnnie or Jimmy would get home with a blow which made their opponent wince.

Needless to say that Mrs. Northwood and the other ladies did their best to stop this savage sport, but Captain Northwood deliberately encouraged it, and liked Grinston all the better because he flogged his son with a stout, supple stick, which left the lad with scarcely a sound square inch of skin on his body. "It will do the boy good!" Northwood would say as he rubbed his hands, and nothing made him happier than the cheerful courage with which his Johnnie took a drubbing which well-

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nigh made a cripple of the lad. It was Northwood's way!

Alternating with these sports were musical evenings, when Johnnie played the piano, and his father would sing to his accompaniment such old-fashioned songs as the "White Squall" in a fine baritone. On such occasions the genial Grinston retired to his room, to sit up far through the night making out bills against the members of the Singapore Cricket Club. He had no ear for music, and when he could not cut up a friend with a good stout basket-hilted ash plant, it soothed him to make out bills which it puzzled certain young men to pay.

CHAPTER IX

A "FAUX PAS" AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

AFTER a certain period young Northwood was put in charge of a section of the Eurasian clerks, who sat at high desks in a long row at the extreme end of the general office, it being his principal duty to see that they turned out their work correctly and within the given time. He was interested in his dusky colleagues and puzzled by their peculiarities. Some of them went by resounding Spanish, Portuguese or Dutch names, such as Albuquerque, Miranda, da Costa, or Magelhaens, while yet another would call himself Donald Bain, or Gustav Fassman. The history of Malacca accounted for such names as Albuquerque and Magelhaens, but the fact that there still existed a firm in Raffles Square of the style of Bain, McGlashan and Co., and that the offices of Gustav Fassman and Co. were next door, suggested that in the earlier days of the colony a bygone Bain and a departed Fassman had taken unto themselves daughters of the land, of whom certain clerks in Brownlow's office were the mixed progeny.

Johnnie noted that his small squad of Eurasian clerks had their little failings. If they could come to office late and get away early they did so, and generally there was an air of irresponsibility about them. They were also much in the habit of getting into debt, and expended much ingenuity in wheedling loans in advance of their salary under varied pretexts. Relatives died suddenly in circumstances of dire poverty, or twins made their appearance at a moment of financial crisis, with amazing frequency. Otherwise they were very decent clerks indeed,

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who did their work excellently, provided some one kept them up to it.

Such characteristics were abhorrent to the downright nature of Johnnie, who, it is to be feared, was a bit of a bully as a very young man. He had a leaning to the "belaying pin" methods of his father, for which his education and his position partly accounted. In his own mind he accused the Eurasian staff of "soldiering," and it can be easily understood that he soon became very unpopular amongst them. He was soon to learn that he must not presume too far on the docility of the Eurasians. Angered by the neglect of his work, backed up by a certain mild insolence on the part of Mr. Alfonso de Albuquerque, he so far forgot himself as to call that gentleman "a lazy snuff-coloured son of a gun"—a deplorable expression, undoubtedly inspired by injudicious studies of the "Ingoldsby Legends." The clerk with the long name promptly put on his hat and left the office. Next day, he came back with a sheet of foolscap in his hand, on which he stated, in his most exquisite copperplate writing, that he had been grossly insulted the previous day by Mr. Northwood, who had called him "the son of a snuff-coloured gun" before several people. All the years he had served Brownlow and Co. he had been kindly treated until Mr. Northwood came, and he finally tendered his resignation. This statement of his case he left on Mr. Carlyle's desk, and went to his seat to await results.

Carlyle was very angry indeed over the affair. Albuquerque was the finest penman in the whole office, and turned out documents which looked as if they had been engraved. Besides, his father had served in Brownlow's before him, and that a respectable Eurasian should be so treated was a thing not to be endured. So Northwood was sent for to be regaled with a dose of his own medicine.

"Did you say any such thing as this to Albuquerque?" asked Carlyle. Johnnie replied that he had not called the gun "snuff-coloured," but the man himself. Carlyle

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then rubbed it into him handsomely that his conduct was not only ungentlemanly, but mean and cowardly in the extreme. Also that, from an office point of view, one Albuquerque was worth two Northwoods. Finally Carlyle ordered him to apologize to Albuquerque. This Northwood absolutely declined to do, but he expressed his regret at his conduct, and promised to be more careful of the feelings of his Eurasian colleagues in future.

With this Carlyle had to be content, and doubtless the thing had gone far enough already, for the young fellow's rebuke was even more public than his insult to Albuquerque. The general office was but a huge, white-washed barn of a place, in which tables and desks were scattered about. No hedge of privacy surrounded the person of Carlyle, the managing partner and the supreme authority. He simply sat at his desk in a particular corner of the great room, from which he could keep every member of his staff under his own personal supervision. Some great men prefer to shut themselves up in stuffy little rooms to which it is difficult to gain admittance. But Carlyle sat boldly out in the open, where he could see everybody, and everybody could see him.

The joy of the Eurasians over Northwood's disgrace was manifested in grins and sniggers, which became so indecently manifest that Carlyle sent for the two principal offenders, told them that any disobedience to Mr. Northwood's orders meant instant dismissal, and invited them to say exactly when they intended to repay certain moneys borrowed from Brownlow and Co. The Eurasians were at once reduced to a singularly knock-kneed condition, and business promptly resumed its normal course in Brownlow's office. Johnnie took his gruelling very quietly, because he knew that he had been in the wrong, a view which was strongly impressed upon him by his father also.

A few weeks later, however, he was doomed to get into much more serious trouble over his Eurasian friends.

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James Halliday, ever the soul of mischief, persuaded Johnnie that it would be great fun for them to go to a dance given by the Miraflores family in honour of the wedding of their eldest daughter. Invitations were easily to be procured, and Jimmy undertook that they should be welcome guests. So the young men dressed themselves elaborately and drove out to the Miraflores residence some distance away in the country. Jimmy, who knew everybody, presented Johnnie to the Miraflores family, the bridegroom's family, the da Costas, and many of the notabilities of the Eurasian world. The fun had already started. A Malacca band, composed chiefly of fiddlers, was squeaking out quadrilles, waltzes and polkas in due succession. Refreshments were offered in considerable profusion, and our young men were nothing loth to drink to the health of the bride and bridegroom in two or three bumpers of champagne.

Then Jimmy whispered: "Do you notice how pretty Laura de Miraflores looks to-night?" Johnnie had practically looked at no one else since he came into the room. The bride was merely pretty, but her younger sister Laura was nothing short of beautiful. With a wealth of curly dark hair set off by a single red rose, a pair of the most lustrous eyes imaginable, a small straight nose, and a charming mouth, she had indeed most fascinating features which her clear olive complexion suited most admirably. She had a perfectly delicious figure, set off to much advantage by a plain white frock adorned by pink ribbons; her neck and arms were really lovely, while her hands and feet were singularly small and well shaped. Laura de Miraflores was a phenomenon likely to be found pleasing in the extreme by a much less fastidious critic than a hot-blooded young man with nearly a bottle of champagne in him.

Laura had but little conversation, but she danced divinely, she waltzed by sheer instinct, and gave her enamoured partner the sensation of floating through space.

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Pressed by young Northwood's urgent entreaties, she gave him all the round dances, and sat out the squares with him in the corner of a verandah.

Meanwhile, the son of the celebrated captain was creating a sensation of which he little recked. An eager group was formed round the worthy Mr. and Mrs. de Miraflores, who devoted themselves to lively chatter about the Northwood family. A sallow youth said: "I hear Captain Northwood have at least five thousand dollar!" Five thousand dollars represented a colossal fortune to the luckless Eurasian, who drew a salary of twenty dollars a month and had debts representing about five years of his pay. "Five thousand dollar!" shrieked another coloured gentleman, drawing forty dollars a month, and owing debts in proportion, "the captin has one million dollar!" This magnificent sum set up a respectful hush, and soon all eyes were bent on young Northwood floating round the room, with his right arm firmly grasping the yielding waist of the lovely Laura. Golden dreams flitted before the eyes of certain persons.

All this time James Halliday had been amusing himself in his own way. His flaming red head, his cheery smile, and his breezy coat-tails, were all over the place. He was most unselfish and general in his attentions. Whether he romped round the room with a pretty girl, or nearly killed himself dragging about a fat and elderly lady, it was all the same to Jimmy, who was the life and soul of the party. At intervals, he would stop to have something to drink, and chat with one or another of the Eurasian gentlemen.

Things had gone pretty far between Laura and Johnnie before Jimmy realized the situation. Then Jimmy sought out his misguided friend, and persuaded him to take a whisky and soda, just to put things straight. It was Jimmy's intention to give Johnnie some hint in the way of advice about the danger of making an exhibition of himself with Laura, but just then the fiddles struck up

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a polka, which Jimmy had to dance with a perfectly delightful young lady, and off he went, leaving Johnnie to his fate.

That whisky and soda did the trick! Johnnie never drank spirits, and on top of the champagne the treacherous whisky finished him. He danced that particular polka with Laura, and took her afterwards to the cool verandah, shadowed by palms, and screened by ferns and flowers. Daybreak was approaching, the very air seemed sweet and sensuous. Taking Laura's hand in his, Johnnie hastily poured forth warm words of love and admiration which brought a hot blush to the lovely girl's face, and transformed her into something of well-nigh irresistible beauty. Hereupon Mr. John Dillon Northwood found nothing better to do than to kiss her hand and charming mouth, and to offer Laura his heart and hand.

Laura behaved with considerable decorum under such unexpected circumstances. Still she returned the pressure of his hand, and, after much difficulty, she allowed Johnnie to kiss her again. The infatuated young man had just promised Laura in a high-pitched speech of especial foolishness, that he would speak to her father on the subject of an early marriage, when certain sniggerings and teehees broke disagreeably on his ear. The sound seemed horribly familiar to Johnnie, while they so alarmed Laura that she sprang to her feet and bolted. From behind a shrubbery in the verandah there now crept forth Mr. Alfonso de Albuquerque and Mr. Donald Bain, both of Brownlow and Co., and both lost in grins and sniggers.

With the disappearance of Laura all manner of radiancy had suddenly vanished from the scene, while a couple of cobras would not have given Johnnie a greater shock than the unexpected apparition of his two Eurasian subordinates. The immediate situation was saved by Jimmy Halliday, who came rushing in to say something about daybreak, and the advisability of getting home. Everybody stared and many smiled suggestively as the

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young fellows made their adieux. Mrs. de Miraflores said, in a particularly impressive manner, that she hoped Johnnie would come to see them again very soon, while Mr. Miraflores talked of meeting Captain Northwood shortly. Laura was conspicuous by her absence, but three or four of her brothers, who Johnnie thought were rather unpleasant young men, insisted on seeing him off and shaking hands with him repeatedly.

The departing guests jumped into their buggy, and Jimmy, grabbing the reins, drove off smartly. As soon, however, as they had got into the main road, Jimmy flung his red head back and laughed vociferously. "You've done it this time!" he shrieked. "Fancy proposing to Laura de Miraflores the first time you see her! You're a real hot 'un at the game, Mr. John Dillon Northwood!" Jimmy was further exhilarated at the prospect of one of the young lady's brothers sticking a knife into his friend's ribs if he "didn't run straight." But Johnnie thought Jimmy was an ass, and told him so. From his point of view there was nothing to laugh at, as events promptly proved.

The young men arrived at Greenbanks before the household was astir, and Johnnie, after swearing Jimmy over to temporary secrecy at least, took a cold bath and rolled into his bed; but, alas! not to sleep. Johnnie's dullness and taciturnity at the breakfast-table were put down to fatigue. Jimmy polished off an enormous meal, and bubbled over with mirth and high spirits. According to his account the Miraflores' dance had been too delightful for words.

Young Northwood drove his buggy into town in that particularly austere frame of mind which frequently follows what his father called "a debosh." By George! he was going to slam into his work and make Albuquerque and Co. sit up! He was going to make them pull their weight in the boat this fine day or he would know the reason why! He rattled his fast mare to the office at her top

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speed, and got there a few minutes in advance of the usual time. He was the first of the European staff to set foot in the general office, to find his intended victims congregated in a knot at the back, eagerly discussing his private affairs. His brief, stern orders about the day's work were received with shrieks of derisive laughter.

"Hullo, Johnnee!" giggled Mr. Albuquerque. "How you like my cousin Laura? Soon you become my cousin too! Hee, hee!"

Mr. Donald Bain then poked a lean finger into the unhappy young man's ribs as he said: "You keess Laura plenty! Very prettee! Very nice! Plenty money got, buggy got, everything got! How soon the wedding?"

Mr. Lopez de Castro continued the conversation as follows: "One time I want to marry Laura my own self, but old Miraflores tell me I have no dollar! Mister Miraflores want money for mortgage on house and for promissory notes to chetties. My salary twenty dollar! You verry reech gentleman. Nice son-in-law for Miraflores."

At this stage Johnnie felt himself being affectionately patted by hands that seemed to him to be hot and sticky. He was just pulling himself together to make a final effort to put down this friendly mutiny, when he observed that the scene was being surveyed with much curiosity by Mr. William Wapshot. That settled the business! Northwood savagely strode to his desk, with his brow clothed in thunder, and forthwith began rummaging aimlessly amongst a pile of papers, while Mr. Wapshot took his place amidst the group of excited Eurasians.

When Wapshot had mastered the facts of the case, he burst into a rolling roar of laughter, which re-echoed through the general office, and shook an aged cockroach off the ceiling into Lopez de Castro's inkpot. Just then Mr. Carlyle put in his appearance, and with the arrival of the chief things simmered down, and some semblance of order was established. Fortunately the Brindisi mail had just come in and some important telegrams demanded

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Carlyle's attention. But as soon as he had got through his mail, the worthy Wapshot set the ball rolling again by offering his congratulations to Northwood in his richest and most sonorous tones. Wapshot's "congratulations" were hard to bear; indeed, were most indelicate.

"I hear," said the implacable one, "that she's a very fine gurl indeed, and one that does credit to your heart and mind. She comes, I understand, of a fine, prolific stock, and that twins are the rule in the Miraflores family. Man! you'll be a patriarrch in no time! What shall I send you for a wedding-present? What say you to a double perambulator, my boy?"

Poor Johnnie faced his persecutor bravely enough, and begged Wapshot not to go to the expense of buying a double perambulator. The usual electro-plated toast-rack would be much cheaper, and, perchance, quite as useful. This return shot hit Wapshot pretty hard, because he *always* gave cheap electro toast-racks as wedding-presents, and, although habitually a most abstemious person, was observed to drink champagne and destroy delicate viands to an extent which repaid him several times over for the cost of his toast-rack whenever he honoured a wedding-breakfast with his massive presence.

"Yon's real guid!" retorted Wapshot, with a wink and a grin, and, so saying, he went to his desk, satisfied that he had successfully perpetrated the mischief he intended.

Carlyle was necessarily much incensed about all that was going on in the office, but he was a man who bided his time, and he wisely determined to wait until events should explain the mystery. A little after mid-day Northwood caught Carlyle's eye, and things having by this time become intolerable, he walked up to his chief's desk, and said very quietly: "Mr. Carlyle, may I have tiffin with you to-day?"

"Certainly, Johnnie! It's a bit early, but if you have anything to say to me we may as well have tiffin at once, before anyone else disturbs us."

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So the pair of them went to the tiffin-room, and while Carlyle set to work on his soup and toast, Johnnie trifled with a bit of cold chicken, and nervously, but very clearly, told his story. Carlyle suddenly dropped his spoon in the soup while he brushed his toast off the table. Then he stuck his hands into his pockets, and fixing his keen blue eyes on Johnnie's face, gave vent to his feelings in a prolonged whistle.

"What will you do next?" groaned Carlyle. "Why, Johnnie, I wouldn't be your unfortunate father for all Lombard Street!"

Another aspect of the case was that Johnnie's position in the general office had become untenable, because he had lost all authority over his subordinates.

Just then Mr. Isaac Henson, the other Singapore partner, entered the tiffin-room, and asked what was the matter. Now while Johnnie respected and liked Henson, he stood in some dread of this singularly austere, upright man, who, tall, erect, clear-eyed and scrupulously neat, looked as if he could never have committed a mean or incorrect action in his life. An exceedingly abstemious and clean-living man, he had an aversion which he never attempted to cloak from anything in the way of deceitfulness, drunkenness, or immorality in any form.

"Well!" said Mr. Henson, after he had been told the tale, "it's a bad business, but if Northwood promised to marry Miss Miraflores, he must keep his word. There is no other way of looking at it. The family is most respectable, and the young woman's reputation must not suffer through the actions of Mr. Northwood, or anyone else. Not a suitable match, of course! The Miraflores are Roman Catholics, and Captain and Mrs. Northwood are such good Presbyterians!"

Here Mr. Henson heaved a bitter sigh and proceeded to demolish his frugal tiffin. As for Northwood's future position in the office, Henson bluntly expressed his opinion that "outside" was the most suitable place for the young

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man. To this proposition Carlyle would by no means agree. He suggested to the astonished Henson that he might do much worse than find a billet for young Northwood on his own staff in the Sale Room.

Henson, with all his austerity, was in reality singularly kind-hearted and charitably disposed, so it being understood on all sides that Northwood should conduct himself with due propriety and that his private affairs should be suitably dealt with by his father, it was arranged there and then that the young scapegrace should be transferred to the Import Department. Henson said: "As a matter of fact, Atkins says he has too much to do, and has been asking me for some time past to give him a junior, so I suppose Northwood will do as well as anyone else, if he really will behave himself decently."

So Johnnie was forthwith transferred to the Sale Room, and was handed over to Mr. Atkins as his junior. Mr. Atkins was a smart, dapper man of about thirty, who always had a cheerful and prepossessing air about him. For some reason or another, he was known as "Drum Atkins," and was wont, on occasion, to describe himself as "the son of Wurkinjaw and Atkins, the eminent solicitors next door."

Mr. Atkins was delighted with his new recruit, and said to him in the most pleasant way, which contrasted gratefully with Wapshot's utterances: "Well! I hear there has been some trouble about a certain young lady. Don't let that worry you too much. I daresay your father will get you out of that little difficulty. Now, if you have nothing better to do, I will show you how to write up the Day Book and the Stock Books."

Johnnie, being on his mettle, set to work on the ponderous tomes with the appetite of a tiger. Atkins, who simply loathed writing up these "beastly books," was enchanted with his pupil, and prophesied golden days for him in the Import Department of Brownlow and Co.

Having to go out on business during the afternoon,

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Johnnie fell in with John Grinston, who greeted him with a horrid, grating laugh and various coarse pleasantries about Laura de Miraflores, which shook him up considerably. Next, he fell into the clutches of Mr. William Johnson, who suggested a temporary way out of his difficulties, namely, to serve as steward on board of a sailing ship which his firm was sending to Greenock *viâ* the Cape of Good Hope. It was William's idea that by the time the vessel reached Greenock "things would settle down a bit in Singapore!"

When he reached Greenbanks, he found his father looking particularly glum; Alexander Melville seemed to have something on his mind, and his mother, who was trying to make herself agreeable to a lady visitor, had red eyes, and had evidently been indulging in a flood of tears.

Mrs. Dashwood, a pretty and most notorious flirt, hailed Johnnie's arrival with enthusiasm. "Come here, you bad boy, and tell me all about it," she said, as she led him out to a secluded corner in the front verandah.

"Now then! what have you done?" she continued, as she settled herself comfortably in a bamboo chair. "Why, I thought you were in love with Clara Campbell, and now it turns out to be Laura de Miraflores! Besides all that, I thought you were rather fond of *me!*" added the fair Flora, with a positively wicked flirt of her fan, and the ghost of an over-worked blush.

Notwithstanding his abject misery, Johnnie had the impudence to assure Mrs. Dashwood that, taken all round, she was the only woman whom he had ever really loved, a bare-faced statement, causing the lady to revel in peals of silvery laughter, which jarred the nerves of the silly boy's unhappy parents to an extent of which he little recked.

Finally, Mrs. Dashwood took her departure, and the inhabitants of Greenbanks sat down to their dinner. A superb curry seemed tasteless to various people seated at

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the table, while John Grinston discoursed at large about breach-of-promise cases and the tragedies of the Divorce Court.

After this dismal dinner, Alexander Melville had a word to say to Johnnie. "My dear Don Juan! Put yourself in your father's hands, and do exactly what he tells you. And, mind you, don't make a fool of yourself again, or you and I part company!"

Captain Northwood walked round the garden with his son while he explained to him the folly of getting involved with even the prettiest and best educated Eurasian girls. There might be exceptions, but generally these very pretty creatures faded very early. And then the children of such unions gave rise to endless complications and unhappiness in later life. The father instanced a case of a well-known man of considerable wealth, who shot himself sooner than take his wife and family home to England when circumstances made it necessary for him to leave Singapore. Johnnie, who had heard quite enough of poor innocent Laura by this time, professed his heartfelt repentance, and left everything in the hands of his father. He went to bed, feeling as if he had been tarred, feathered, and flung into a mudbank. He slept from sheer exhaustion and worry.

Next morning Captain Northwood spent the whole morning with Mr. de Miraflores. Gossips said that the wealthy shipowner took his cheque-book with him, and that Mr. de Miraflores shortly afterwards paid off his mortgage and certain other liabilities which had been bothering him for some time past. The unhappy Laura, who had taken a violent fancy for Johnnie, whether he had money or not, was sent off for a prolonged visit to certain relatives in Malacca, whom she cordially detested.

So matters were settled after a fashion, but the whole business made Johnnie feel several years older, and threw a shadow over his life which saddened him for nearly a fortnight. He applied himself to his work as a consolation,

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to the unfeigned satisfaction of Mr. Atkins. In a short time the latter found that he could leave the office to Northwood while he went round the bazaar to look up the big dealers in Boat Quay and Market Street. Northwood was duly authorized to sign the delivery orders, which enabled purchasers to obtain their goods from the big Brownlow godowns in different parts of the town.

All was well until Atkins went on important business to the Penang firm, leaving his young colleague in temporary charge of the Rough Goods Department. Had he had any inkling of the Napoleonic designs which Johnnie was nursing at the back of his head, he would never have gone to Penang. Johnnie's main idea was to revolutionize the trade and show Brownlow and Co. what he could do. The godowns were full of merchandise, which could, and should, be sold off promptly and replaced from Europe. How it would astonish Atkins if on his return from Penang he found his godowns practically empty, and the Singapore house energetically cabling for fresh supplies. Of course, a considerable expansion of the credit system would be necessary to bring about this sublime result, but Johnnie soon persuaded himself that this was all right, and started in to work out his notable scheme.

Soon it got round the bazaar that Brownlow's *kuda baru* (*new horse*) was keen on selling goods on three months' credit, a thing which Tuan Atkins, now safely out of the road in Penang, was singularly reluctant to so much as consider. Atkins, with rare exceptions, wrote all his delivery orders in red ink, thus indicating cash payments; a delivery order in black ink, indicating three months' credit, was only granted by him on rare occasions, and after unpleasing discussions as to who would back the buyer's promissory note, and inquiries of a most personal nature concerning the financial resources of the intending purchaser.

Johnnie, having removed these unnatural barriers to commerce on grand lines, was soon doing a rushing business.

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He had Chinese clerks instead of Eurasians in the Import Department, nice, sleek, yellow young men, with their pigtailed neatly plaited up with red, white, or blue silk cords, as the case might be. They did not write the lovely copperplate of the Eurasians, but they were observant and intelligent—a trifle too intelligent, perhaps, for the posts they occupied. They were *baba* Chinese, educated in the Raffles School. They preserved to the full, however, the stolid indifference of the Chinese to all matters not immediately concerning them. If their new chief, the *kuda baru*, chose to make a fool of himself, that was no business of theirs! If he had chosen to consult them, they could easily have told him whose credit was good and whose was not; but, unfortunately, Northwood, carried away by the grandeur of his scheme, never thought of taking anybody into his confidence.

The young man's desk was soon the centre of a crowd of eager buyers, anxious to make hay while the sun shone. The unwonted activity of things soon attracted the attention of such an alert man as Mr. Henson, who let things take their course on the first day, but finding his junior fairly mobbed on the second day, strode across to his desk, and said suspiciously: "What are you doing, Northwood? Not cutting prices, I hope?"

"Certainly not!" replied our hero. "On the contrary, I am putting five per cent. to ten per cent. on the limits."

This puzzled Henson more than enough, until a horrid thought occurred to him, as he said: "Give me your order-book!" He cast an experienced glance over the numerous counterfoils of the delivery orders, and gasped as he said: "Good gracious! *All in black ink!* Do you know what that means?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Northwood; "three months' credit!"

Then the storm broke. "What's this?" roared Henson as he looked at the first of the counterfoils. "'Hoo Kit

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chop Bang Yu, one thousand cases of gin at five dollars.' I never heard of Hoo Kit, or his precious *chop*, and here you are giving him credit for five thousand dollars! And what's this again? 'Ali Slopir Khan, twenty cases of Enfield rifles and five hundred kegs of gunpowder!'"

Then suddenly realizing the seriousness of the position, Henson shouted to the nearest Chinese clerk: "Here, Boon Whatt! Take a gharry at once, and drive round to the godowns, to tell the storekeepers they are on no account to deliver another package under orders signed by Mr. Northwood. Look sharp! And tell the storekeepers I'll be round myself in five minutes!"

Then Henson summoned Northwood into the presence of Carlyle, the senior partner, and, white with rage, told him of what had taken place.

"I knew something of the kind would happen. I told you that *outside* was the only place for this young gentleman, but you wouldn't listen to me. I'd sooner he made a fool of forty young women than ruin us like this! That's not exactly what I mean, perhaps; but you understand, Carlyle, that I wash my hands of Mr. Northwood. He mustn't so much as come *near* the Sale Room again! Well, I'm off!"

So saying, he slipped into his coat and went racing down the stairs to stem the tide of disaster as best he could.

Carlyle was absolutely aghast at the situation. "Well, I'm hanged!" he said. "What next? I'm afraid we shall have to give you the sack this time, Johnnie. I don't see any other way out of it myself! You had better wait in the tiffin-room until Henson comes back and we decide your fate."

Before Johnnie could reach this asylum, Mr. Wapshot, to the hysterical delight of the clerks at the back desks, urgently begged Johnnie to sell him a bottle of champagne on three months' credit. Wapshot pleaded that, although he mightn't be so rich as Hoo Kit, or so respectable "as your friend the Khan," still, he was honest enough in his

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way, and would meet his promissory note for "the bottle of bubbly" when it fell due.

Amid the derisive laughter excited by this banter, Johnnie took refuge in the tiffin-room and there sat down to think. Presently he was roused from his meditations by a tamby, who brought him a note as follows :

" Thursday.

" MY DEAR NORTHWOOD,

" I am thinking of taking a trip to Monte Carlo. Please let me know at what price you can sell me one hundred casks of dollars. Of course, three months' credit is understood. I will sign my promissory note directly I get the goods.

" Yours sincerely,

" WILLIAM JOHNSON."

Johnnie tore up the "chit," and told the astonished tamby to go to the demon for the answer. Now Johnson had instructed his messenger that he must not on any account return without it, so Johnnie had quite a lot of trouble in getting rid of the tamby. This was, of course, only the beginning of the storm of chaff and ridicule which he was to encounter in its full force a little later.

Presently Henson returned, looking very hot and tired. Things were not so bad as they might have been. Hoo Kit *chop* Bang Yu, had succeeded in getting away to Saigon with his thousand cases of gin by a French steamer. Ali Slopir Khan had sailed that very morn for the Isles of the Blest, or some equally ill-defined destination, in a Bugis prahu, with his cargo of rifles and powder. However, Henson had stopped delivery of the great bulk of the goods, and had recovered a quantity of valuable stuff actually loaded in bullock-carts and cargo-boats. There was such a congestion of vehicles and lighters round the godowns that those which were already laden could not get away, and this gave Henson his chance.

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“ Altogether, I don't think we stand to lose much over fifteen thousand dollars, and considering the fact that our enterprising young friend seems to have done a business running into something like half a million dollars in two days, we've got off pretty cheap. Send a telegram to Atkins, ordering him to return from Penang by the first steamer.”

So saying Henson dropped into a chair, completely exhausted with his efforts.

At this juncture Captain Northwood came striding into the office, with a proposal to make good his son's losses, but neither Henson nor Carlyle would hear of it.

“ No ! ” said the former, “ your son was our clerk when he sold our goods, and we must stand the loss, not you ! Besides, it will be the ruin of the lad if he feels you are there to pay for his mistakes all the time ; he won't know what mischief he is doing. However, it is very good of you all the same. The next thing is, what are we going to do about your son ? What do you think about it, Carlyle ? ”

Mr. Carlyle looked troubled for a moment, and then said : “ I am afraid, Captain Northwood, that we must ask you to take your son out of our office. We have other young men of about his own age on our staff, and if serious losses are treated as a joke, there is an end of all discipline and efficiency. It may be the best lesson for him in the end if Johnnie is paid his salary up to the last day of the month and dismissed in due form. Besides, I don't really know what to do with him. He has been through two departments in a few weeks and made himself impossible in both.”

Henson concurred ; and Captain Northwood, while he regretted the decision, acquiesced in its justice. Johnnie was therefore summoned from the tiffin-room to hear his sentence, which, like his father, he accepted with a good grace, which touched the group in front of him more than a little.

Just at the final moment, however, deliverance came from

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a totally unexpected quarter. The grave and harmonious voice of Mr. John Finlay, who had been watching the proceedings with much interest, was suddenly raised on Johnnie's behalf. "If nobody else wants young Northwood, I think I should like to try him in the Chartering Department, and see if I can make something of him."

Everybody was astounded, because John Finlay enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most capable and level-headed men in Singapore. Carlyle was secretly overjoyed with this new turn of events, but he merely said: "Well, Finlay! If you want him, by all means take him. But have a care, or Mr. Northwood will either buy or sell a fleet of steamers for our account before you know anything about it."

Finlay smiled gravely, and remarked that he would keep such an eventuality in view.

Henson chimed in with a cheerful remark, that he would as soon be shut up in a powder-magazine with a young lunatic provided with a blazing torch as have anything to do with Johnnie Northwood. However, if Finlay would hold himself responsible, he for one had no earthly objection, and was only too glad to make things pleasant for his friend, Captain Northwood.

Finlay walked his new assistant out of the General Office, across a corridor, and into the Chartering Department, and had a short chat with him in a quiet, friendly, but impressive way. There was to be no nonsense, orders had to be obeyed, and hard and constant work to be taken as the natural order of things in the Chartering Department. Finlay finally said: "If I had not been taking particular notice of you, and made up my mind that there is plenty of good stuff in you, I should not have asked for you this afternoon. But, mind you, Northwood, if you find me a hard master it will be for your own good. I intend to be especially hard on you, and if you can't stand the training, it means that you are that contemptible creature, the worthless son of a rich man. Now, I think

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you have had enough trouble for one day, so run off home with your father, and mind that you are at your desk at nine o'clock to-morrow morning. There are days when I shall want you a good deal earlier."

Johnnie walked out of the Chartering Department with rather mingled feelings. It occurred to him transiently that the "sack" which he so narrowly escaped would have made things much easier for him; but, after all, Finlay had struck the right note. Johnnie swore to himself that he was not going to be a waster or a slacker, and that he would put up his own fight independently of his father's dollars.

Captain Northwood drove his son to Greenbanks in a singularly happy frame of mind. Johnnie was also cheerful enough. His father warned him to say nothing about his narrow escape from dismissal; that was a little matter which others might publish when the facts got known, but as long as he was reinstated nobody could have much to say about the whole affair.

At the dinner-table John Grinston was much chagrined to find his most envenomed attacks fall flat. He had heard a confused story, according to which Johnnie Northwood had been bundled neck and crop out of the Brownlow office on the discovery of his delinquencies. Why were Captain Northwood and his son so happy? Grinston could never forget that Brownlow and Co. had given *him* the sack.

James Halliday also tried to be funny at the expense of his bosom friend, without raising any laugh except his own. The complacency of the Northwood family under such circumstances was most disconcerting.

The next day Johnnie started in on a sheer course of slavery in the Chartering Department. Mr. Finlay, in the gentlest way possible, made life a considerable burden to the young man, while he drilled him remorselessly into the intricacies of a singularly complicated business.

In due course Mr. Atkins arrived from Penang, in a

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highly indignant frame of mind at being so suddenly recalled. But to Mr. Henson's amazement, he started in to bewail the loss of his junior. He insisted that Northwood was far and away the best "cub" he had ever seen. Supposing that Northwood *had* committed a gross error in giving credit to all and sundry, were not the consequences a full and sufficient guarantee that he would never make such a mistake again. Atkins swore by all his gods that in future young Northwood would look on young women and on men of straw as being equally dangerous persons. He stormed into the Chartering Department and demanded that Northwood should be given back to him. But Finlay answered him with a decisive "No!"

"I can't make it out!" grumbled Isaac Henson. "Everybody seems to take a fancy to that young scapegrace, and the worst of it is, I rather like him myself!"

CHAPTER X

WOODLEIGH

AT last the glad tidings came that Sir Henry and Lady Neville were going home, so that the Northwoods could take up their residence at Woodleigh.

Lady Neville had experienced some of the domestic troubles incidental to housekeeping in a place like Singapore. A beautiful woman herself, she had brought out a couple of exceedingly pretty maids with her to look after her children. Alas! the maids in question were much too pretty for an island where pretty maids were scarce.

These young women took their walks abroad amidst a sort of escort from the barracks, but as time progressed, civilians holding responsible positions, and supposed to be gentlemen, paid marked attentions to the Woodleigh maids, who thereupon turned up their pretty noses at the "tommies," to the huge vexation of these gallant men. Finally Lady Neville had to make up her mind to send the girls home before they got into serious mischief, and they accordingly went back to England. Sir Henry, in discussing the matter with Captain Northwood, grumbled a bit about his being put to so much expense, on account of the scandalous conduct of certain men who were of an age and position to know better. After a sad experience of a number of unsatisfactory native ayahs, Lady Neville found herself compelled to get a European nurse for her children, and wrote to her mother to select one for her, a decent woman of over forty years of age, and positively ugly!

In due course the new nurse arrived at Singapore. Captain Northwood, having volunteered to meet Miss

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Jones on board the steamer, and take her and her belongings to Woodleigh, the offer was gratefully accepted by Sir Henry. Having carried out this useful duty, the Captain reported the same evening at Greenbanks that the new nurse was "a great strapping, slab-sided, block-faced woman of fifty, with a tremendous squint," little likely to attract the unwelcome notice of the profligates of Singapore. Alas! Miss Jones had not been at Woodleigh a month before she proved irresistible to a lonely sergeant of the "Invincibles," and in three weeks more she was Mrs. O'Brien of the regiment. Poor Sir Henry had to make this unprofitable person a present, and to pay for the wedding-breakfast. He plaintively told Captain Northwood that it was about time for him to take his family to England.

When Johnnie went to pay his farewell visit to Lady Neville, and to wish her a safe and pleasant voyage home, he was accompanied by M. le Vicomte Armand Duplessis de Belleville, a dissipated and somewhat dilapidated sprig of nobility, who did the French Republic the honour to represent it at Singapore.

This day the Vicomte had got himself up regardless of expense, and wore the whole of his numerous decorations, so that he looked a very imposing personage indeed.

During the drive to Woodleigh, the Consul insisted on being coached up by Johnnie into learning a few sentences in English suitable for the occasion. The whole thing ended by the Vicomte saying "Good-bye, Madame!" to Lady Neville when he entered the drawing-room, and "How do you do, Madame?" when he left it.

The morning after the Nevilles sailed for Europe, the Northwoods bade their grateful farewells to their kind friends the Hallidays and the Melvilles. The Captain and his son went to town as usual, but Mrs. Northwood drove straight to her dear Woodleigh, to set about the pleasurable task of getting her household in order.

Woodleigh, as has been said, was a big, substantial

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mansion, crowning the summit of a gentle hill, surrounded by thirty-six acres of land, which Northwood had been incessantly beautifying for many years. Lovely lawns and flower-gardens surrounded the house. The Captain had skilfully left a belt of native jungle standing on one side of the carriage drive—a beautiful thing in itself, which screened off the stables, cow-houses, poultry-runs and other domestic offices. The slopes of the hills were planted with a wonderful variety of orange-trees, transplanted at great expense from all parts of the world. There was also a superb grove of mangosteen-trees, which yielded an abundant supply of this delicious fruit in perfection. Clumps of bamboos agreeably diversified the grounds. But perhaps the glory of the place was the *waringin* tree at the immediate back of the house. This marvellous tree grew in the centre of a quadrangle formed by the kitchen and the servants' quarters. Like a banyan tree, it had several trunks, and was a miniature forest in itself, which, growing to a considerable height, cast a cool and delightful shade over the whole court. Few moments could be more pleasantly passed in the early morn over a cup of tea in the great back verandah than in watching the flocks of birds animating the green depths of the great *waringin* as the rising sun flooded it with colour.

In a short time Northwood had the Woodleigh establishment on its proper footing. It needed a force of thirty gardeners to keep the grounds in order. There were half a dozen syces for the stables, another half-dozen natives to look after the cows and the poultry, while the cooks, the native butler and his staff, the watermen, "boys" and sweepers required another dozen or more people to carry on the upkeep of such an establishment. Altogether something like sixty servants of various kinds were on the pay-roll of Woodleigh to attend to a family of exactly three people. With their wives and families there were a whole lot of dependents of varied races, as Klings, Javanese, Chinese and Boyanese, whom Northwood ruled with a

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firm but gentle hand. The only Malay on the establishment was Johnnie's "boy" Lapis, who was his valet and factotum in general. Lapis was a bright little gentleman of some twelve years of age, who considered himself entirely responsible for the well-being of his master, whom he served for many a year with a dog-like fidelity.

Northwood had denied his son the luxury of a saddle-horse as long as they lived at Greenbanks. He did not desire that Johnnie should go in for anything beyond the means of his friend James Halliday.

But once at Woodleigh, circumstances were different, and the Captain soon had six well-selected horses standing in his stables. The Captain's mount was a sturdy weight-carrier, a bay "waler" called the "Doctor," who never forgot his Australian buck-jumping ways. For Johnnie he had bought a beautiful half-bred Arab mare, for which he paid a wandering Cabulense a long price. For no particular reason, Johnnie named his mare "Lucy," and the two were destined to be faithful friends for many years. The other four were carriage-horses—a pair for Mrs. Northwood, and a couple of "trappers" for the men's buggies.

The rooms of Woodleigh were unusually spacious. The great dining-room on the ground floor extended the whole length of the house from the front to the back. The drawing-room on the upper floor was of the same proportions, opening into cool, roomy verandahs at each end. A huge basket of roses, renewed every morning from the gardens, was the chief ornament of the drawing-room, of which the furniture was comfortable but simple. Still, with its beautiful spotless flooring of the finest Calcutta matting in a uniform shade of pale cream, and its white walls and ceiling, the place was made to look very attractive, albeit an Erard piano was perhaps the only really expensive thing it contained. The bedrooms and bath-rooms were large, lofty and comfortable. Each bedroom had its own verandah, and everything was protected from the sun by

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wide-spreading eaves, supported on columns of a native hardwood of an enormous size, which would appear phenomenal at the present day.

One of the beauties of Woodleigh was its pillared portico, and the great marble vestibule behind it, adorned with statues banked up in rich masses of the most delicate ferns, flowering orchids, and other rare plants. This was a favourite retreat of the Northwoods on such occasions as a Sunday forenoon after breakfast.

Such, then, was the home of the young clerk, who was drawing a salary of fifty dollars a month from Brownlow and Co.

The social position of the Northwoods gave rise to much cackle in Singapore society, divided into cliques, and greatly given to gossip of an ill-natured kind. True, Sir Henry and Lady Neville chose to be on very friendly terms with the Northwoods, but the lease of Woodleigh to the Chief Justice might possibly explain that little matter. His Excellency Sir William Jervois, being Governor of the Straits Settlements, Commander-in-Chief, &c., for the time being, it was rather more difficult to understand why Lady Jervois and her daughters should visit Mrs. Northwood. Again, His Excellency the Governor of Labuan had been a guest at Woodleigh for a whole fortnight. His Highness the Rajah of Sarawak had also honoured Captain Northwood with many civilities during one of his visits to Singapore, and had accepted the lucky sailor's offer when he suggested that Balaclava, which happened to be standing empty at the time, might be a suitable residence for the race week. The white Rajah paid Captain Northwood so much for the rent of Balaclava for the time during which he occupied one of the many houses owned by Captain Northwood in the best parts of Tanglin, but there were many attentions and much assistance in small domestic details which could not be accounted for in mere cash.

Mr. Welford, the Colonial Astronomer-General, also took up the Northwoods very heartily, and introduced

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them into certain sacred circles of official society, until he discovered that Johnnie Northwood had not the slightest idea of marrying his somewhat full-blown daughter, who had already been the victim of two or three unfortunate "engagements" which had been mysteriously broken off at the last moment. Then Mr. Welford gave his select friends to understand that he had been somewhat deceived concerning the Northwoods, whom he had discovered to be very vulgar people, rolling in money, which he devoutly hoped might not prove to be merely ill-gotten and illusory gains.

In less distinguished circles the ways of the Northwoods gave dire offence. The Captain literally kept open house. All and sundry were welcome to his unstinted hospitality. He made no distinction between rich or poor, and absolutely refused to recognize the existence of cliques. To him any man or woman was as good as another, always provided that there was any degree of actual merit or social attractiveness in the said man or woman. He also, as has been remarked, had a deplorable instinct for helping social lame dogs over social stiles.

Many genteel people asked each other: "Who is Captain Northwood, and who is his son, who goes clerking at Brownlow's for fifty dollars a month?" Questions indeed! Captain and Mrs. Northwood mixed their guests a little bit too recklessly. It did not matter whether they had an Excellency, or the Colonial Astronomer-General, or perhaps the Colonel of the "Invincibles" to dinner with their respective wives and daughters; if Captain Lugard happened to drop in with his volcanic pipe, or Mr. Tom Jones of the Telegraph Service chose to call about seven o'clock, the Northwoods greeted them with the same welcome. Indeed, they apparently were rather more pleased to see Captain Lugard and Tom Jones, a really entertaining and clever creature, than the most exalted persons of Singapore society.

Mrs. Binkie, of Smithers, Binkie and Co., was scandalized

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to find herself seated at table next to Mr. Tom Jones of the Telegraph Service at one of the usual big dinners at Woodleigh. She was still more indignant when Captain Northwood explained to her, in a quiet corner of the front verandah, that he, Northwood, was but a sailor-man, and, according to his view, between a sailor-man and a telegraph-man there was little to choose, both being equally disreputable. He even told Mrs. Binkie that when he was in Sydney in the "forties," he noted an inscription on the cemetery gates, which ran as follows: "Dogs and Sailors are not Admitted."

Next time Mrs. Northwood called on Mrs. Binkie, Mrs. Binkie told her "boy" to tell Mrs. Northwood that Mrs. Binkie was "out." Poor Captain Northwood's sincerity and misplaced sense of humour made him some enemies and got him into many minor troubles.

One of the Captain's best qualities was his constant charity, his great goodness of heart. This won him the esteem of men like Alexander Melville, Carlyle, Henson, and a few others of the kind; but a charitable disposition did not in the slightest degree help him in society. After all, the Northwoods had as many friends as they wanted, and cared little if certain people were so superior that they did not wish to know them. Northwood had already had experience of more than one gentleman who was only too glad to dine with him, and even borrow a few hundred dollars from him, one week, and cut him dead at Government House the next.

The dinners at Woodleigh were rather formidable affairs, especially for such a hot climate. Sherry and angostura bitters and olives were first served in the front verandah, then everybody trooped downstairs to the dining-room. The dinner generally consisted of two soups, the best fish that could be got, entrées, a roast, various kinds of poultry and game, rice and curry with sambals, sweets, and fruit. The Woodleigh cellar was excellent, and the object of much of Captain Northwood's study. The Rhine

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wines, bordeaux, burgundies and champagne were always very good and nicely served at the right temperature by Joseph, the black butler. Many of the guests would take their soup and fish, and then wait for the curries and sambals, to them the only dishes worthy of attention; whilst others, and especially new-comers, would carefully avoid the curried triumphs of the Woodleigh kitchen and confine themselves to the purely European dishes. But in any event, the *menu* was equal to the occasion.

After dinner the amusements were varied. The seniors made up whist and poker parties in the verandahs, and, if the truth must be told, they played for pretty high stakes, and put down some brandies and sodas at varying intervals. Meanwhile, there would be music in the drawing-room, especially if Mrs. Swanson, who had a most delightful voice, happened to be present; or, failing actual music, there was always somebody to relieve Johnnie at the piano, playing quadrilles, polkas and waltzes.

Lastly, a certain amount of flirting went on as a general rule. If, for instance, Mrs. Northwood noticed that Mr. William Johnson had disappeared simultaneously with Miss Gertie Lightford, she tripped downstairs with a tolerable certainty of finding the fugitive couple behind one of the statues in the vestibule. Mrs. Northwood always liked to see flirtations between young people, because she had romantic hopes of their ending in wedding bells. "Now, Mr. Johnson! So I've caught you, have I? If you have anything serious to say to Miss Lightford, why not say it now? No! you need not pull that beautiful orchid to bits; it happens to be one of my favourites. Well, we want another couple to make up a set of lancers, so if you young people have nothing to do, you had better come upstairs with me." The guilty couple were then seen safely into the drawing-room, where they were not likely to get into any further mischief.

In due course the long line of carriages belonging to the departing guests would make a procession lit up

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with glaring lamps, and sooner or later everybody went home.

No matter how late the Woodleigh household got to bed, Captain Northwood insisted on his son being up by gun-fire, and by daybreak the pair of them would be in the saddle and enjoying the sweet, fresh morning air, during the course of a long and brisk ride through the beautiful country surrounding Tanglin.

Captain and Mrs. Hardy and Miss Hardy were frequent visitors at Woodleigh as time wore on, and with them occasionally came Captain and Mrs. Shelby, who were destined in after life to have a great influence on the future of the Northwood family. Captain Hardy was one of Northwood's most cherished "Shellback" friends. He was certainly a most magnificent old man, well over sixty, tall, robust and healthy. His shock of pure white hair set off a fine, shrewd, clean-shaven face, lit up by a pair of clear blue eyes. Apt to be a bit cynical in his conversation, he was genial enough at heart, and was evidently well read and observant. Mrs. Hardy was a dignified and well-bred woman, but Mary Hardy was the great attraction! Standing six feet high, she was a splendid girl, a trifle too much developed for her age perhaps, but her liveliness, intelligence, and sweet disposition endeared her to all.

Mrs. Northwood frequently told her son that Mary would make an ideal wife for any man, be he rich or poor. She was most anxious that her son should marry as soon as possible, and to her mind he would never find a better wife than Mary Hardy. Johnnie was often inclined to agree with his mother on this point, but put off serious consideration of such an important question until some later date, especially as his father evidently did not wish him to rush into matrimony at such an early age.

Captain Hardy sailed the *Victory*, a full-rigged ship, his own property, and loaded with his own cargoes, between Singapore and the Moluccas Islands. It must have been

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a very profitable trade, for Hardy, without being as wealthy as Captain Northwood, was a man of ample means.

Captain Shelby had originally served as mate on board of the *Victory*, but having got sufficient money to buy a smart and staunch barque called the *Ceylon*, he married Hardy's eldest daughter and started on his own account. Although Shelby traded to the Celebes, and even as far as New Guinea, he generally turned up at the Spice Islands in the course of his long voyages, and thus trespassed on his father-in-law's preserves to some extent.

Old Hardy certainly did not like the visits of the *Ceylon* to Amboina, Ternate and Banda, but as long as it was merely an incidental trade at long intervals, he did not mind so much if his son-in-law did get possession of certain supplies of nutmegs, mace and cloves.

Shelby was a fat, awkward sort of man, looking much more like a farmer than a sailor, excellent seaman though he actually was. He never looked to greater disadvantage than when he was in evening dress, and knowing this, he always insisted that he should never be asked to Woodleigh when any of the "swells" were expected. It was extraordinary, however, how this dull-looking, lumpish man could make himself interesting when he chose. In a quiet and unassuming way he would manage to hold his listener more or less spellbound, his chat being soothing and sensible, and relieved by flashes of mother wit. Yes! he was plausible enough, especially when he talked business.

Johnnie used to take a singular pleasure in listening to Shelby, who would tell him of the wonderful beauty of the Spice Islands, what quaint and odd people the Dutch colonies contained, and of the amount of money to be made in those waters by anybody possessing sufficient capital. Northwood, when he was told of all this, would remind his son that Shelby was really a Yankee, and "guessed that he was gassing some!" In any case,

Woodleigh

Borneo was their field, not the Moluccas. But, notwithstanding his father's remarks, Johnnie brooded a lot over those mysterious Spice Islands, and to some purpose, as we shall presently see.

The Melvilles frequently found their way to Woodleigh, and so did James Halliday; but the blatant prosperity of the Northwoods was gall and wormwood to John Grinston, and in spite of the most urgent invitations, nothing would induce him to set foot in their house.

Occasionally unexpected visitors strayed in at Woodleigh. One fine Sunday forenoon, a Dutch naval officer in full fig drove up in a gharry as Northwood and his son were lounging about the vestibule discussing things in general. The officer got out of his gharry, announced himself audibly as Captain van Tromp, and with much relief settled himself down in an easy bamboo chair. It being a sweltering hot day, Captain van Tromp seemed to find some nicely cooled Rhine wine very refreshing. It was not until he asked Northwood whether he was the colonel of the regiment that it got to be understood that Captain van Tromp was trying to pay an official visit to the adjacent Tanglin Barracks. However, the jolly Dutchman made the best of the situation, and gladly accepted Northwood's very pressing invitation to stay to tiffin.

The Northwoods and Van Tromp struck up a very hearty friendship over this little incident. Later, Van Tromp introduced Johnnie to Captain Kater, a retired naval officer, at that time acting as Resident of Pontianak. Nothing would suit Johnnie but that they must both dine at Woodleigh that evening. After dinner, Captain Kater and Captain Northwood began comparing notes, and discovered that they were the same Kater and the same Northwood who, as mere lads, had sailed ages ago in a Dutch East Indiaman on their way to Holland. They were both poor and friendless lads at the time, and that they should meet after the lapse of so many long years in such prosperous circumstances was an event duly cele-

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brated in bumpers of champagne. After dinner, Captain Kater showed Johnnie on a map of Dutch Borneo, that the black dot representing the town of Pontianak is cut through by the black line representing the Equator. The Resident averred that by a series of careful observations he had established the fact that the Equator ran right through the centre of his bedroom. The last Kater baby having a troublesome time with its teething and requiring much nursing, the Resident calculated that he had crossed the Line at least one hundred thousand times, that is to say much oftener than any other man in the world!

The neighbouring estate to Woodleigh was a large property of about a hundred acres, belonging to the Maharajah of Johore, but at that time was utterly deserted, the great rambling mansion being in ruins, and the grounds overgrown with jungle. Johnnie would sometimes take his gun, and, squeezing through the bamboo hedge dividing the properties, bring home a few green pigeon, which were remarkably good eating.

But the neighbouring jungle soon provided the young sportsman with other shooting. It swarmed with monkeys, horrible brutes who invaded the beautifully kept Woodleigh grounds and amused themselves by pulling up plants and stripping the trees of fruit until they got to be an intolerable nuisance, so Johnnie was told off to shoot them down. He soon got to be an expert in shooting monkeys dead, a wounded monkey being a harrowing object. But one day he came to grief in an unexpected way over this business. Near the house his father had planted some *tarap* trees which he had brought from Brunei. They are very beautiful trees, with an enormous wealth of exceedingly huge leaves, any one of which would have made an ample apron for Mother Eve. They bear a fruit something of the jack-fruit tribe, beloved of natives, but having a powerful odour repellent to the ordinary European. One morning, as Johnnie was getting ready for his bath, Lapis took down a gun from the rack and, running up to

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his master, told him with great excitement that a whole tribe of monkeys was in one of the *tarap* trees. Slipping in a couple of cartridges, Johnnie ran after Lapis, and sure enough a great *tarap* was the scene of much hidden commotion, while the fruit was fast falling from the tree. It was impossible to discern anything through the dense screen of great leaves, and anything like a clean shot being impossible, Johnnie let drive with both barrels into the centre of the tree. A dismal howl followed the shots, and to the sportsman's dismay a Chinaman fell with a thud to the ground. It was the *tukang ayer*, the water man, shaking the fruit off the branches, and not a drove of monkeys. Lapis looked up at his master with a delightful grin and said "*Tuan suda dapat!*" (It is impossible to render this into English, but perhaps "You've got him!" is the nearest translation.) By insinuation, Lapis more than hinted that his master was out shooting Chinamen and had bagged one of them at the first shot.

The young Englishman already knew that it does not do to be taken at a disadvantage by a Chinaman or any other native, so getting the luckless *tukang ayer* on his feet, Johnnie said to him very sternly: "Next time you do that, I shall be very angry with you!" The Chinaman, who had been pretty badly peppered about the legs with a good dose of No. 4 shot, simply said: "Very well, *Tuan!*" and hobbled off to the servants' quarters. Mr. Northwood gave the man a couple of dollars, and told him to go to bed for the day. Next morning the *tukang ayer* was at work again as if nothing had happened, but he never climbed another *tarap* tree.

The monkeys also discovered that Woodleigh was an unhealthy sort of spot. After numbers of them had been killed, the mischievous brutes, as if by common accord, confined themselves to the Maharajah's jungle, and Captain Northwood was left to indulge unmolested in his gardening.

CHAPTER XI

AYER MANIS

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD loved Woodleigh. But the old sailor in him missed the sea-breezes, and without the wash of the waves he could scarce exist. So he set out to buy another property which should give him an outlook on his beloved element.

The Captain thought he had got just what he wanted when Pulo Tekong Kechil was for sale. Here was an island, which Northwood fondly hoped to call his own. True, it was small enough, but it was rocky, and indented with little bays which resounded with the surge of the sea.

The Tekong Kechil Island happens to lie close to the Johore coast, and as soon as the Maharajah heard that Captain Northwood was after this especial property, he forestalled him and bought it at any cost. Northwood was chagrined at having lost what he had already deemed his own sea-girt stronghold, and the worst of it was that islands for sale in the vicinity of Singapore are remarkably scarce.

However, the Captain finally purchased a very beautiful property of about four hundred acres on the seashore of Singapore between Tanah Merah and Changhi.

This place is called, by the natives, Ayer Manis—meaning “Sweet Waters,” a name retained by Northwood. Some twelve miles from Singapore town, the estate consisted mainly of lovely jungle, facing the Changhi Road, and this virgin forest Northwood carefully preserved. On the red cliff overlooking a wide stretch of beautiful sands

Ayer Manis

and sea beyond, the Captain built a spacious bungalow amidst a grove of some thousands of coco-nut trees.

Johnnie was delighted with Ayer Manis. There was a lot of mixed shooting in and about the property, and his father, in order to keep up communication with Ayer Manis by sea, allowed his son to have a fine sailing-boat built for him on the best native model. Johnnie's yacht, the *Intan*, manned by a crew of three Malays, was a source of great pleasure to him and many of his friends.

The Captain spent many of his week-ends at Ayer Manis, and speedily established himself as an authority along the coast-line for some miles. Malays and other natives would come from long distances to submit their differences to him, and whatever decision was given by him was always binding and final. No native dreamed of disputing the Captain's judgment, and in this way Johnnie got a considerable insight into native character, which was very useful to him in future years.

Near the bungalow, and within sight of it, there was a little village of native fishermen, who lived in squalid and dirty huts, built of mouldering planks and some sort of elementary palm-leaf thatch. These people were "squatters," who had not the slightest right to be where they were. Northwood could very easily have turned them out of his estate, but that was not his way of doing things. After talking the situation over with the fishermen, he offered to build them an entirely new and comfortable village on the banks of a stream which ran through the property, where they would not be subject to the gaze of Europeans, and be able to live under greatly improved conditions. The fishermen debated this offer for some weeks, and then proceeded in a body to the bungalow one Sunday afternoon to tell Northwood that they would accept it on condition that he would bind himself to give each family a sack of white rice every month. This Northwood absolutely refused to do, and the fishermen departed, looking sullen and discontented. The next time the

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Northwoods visited Ayer Manis, they found, to their amazement, that the village had vanished! The fishermen had voluntarily pulled down their huts and emigrated with their bits of sticks and thatch to another spot at a distance of several miles.

Nothing could possibly have suited the Northwoods better, but it was a little difficult to follow the workings of the native mind in this particular instance. The Captain finally concluded that the fishermen must have thought that if he was willing to go to the considerable expense of building an entirely new village for them, he must have some object in doing so, and that as they were evidently of value to the estate, the white man should pay for them in the shape of some two tons of white rice every month, a particularly handy form of remuneration, practically absolving them from the necessity of doing any work except catching a little fish occasionally. When Northwood refused to supply the rice, they got sulky, and evidently thought the best way of punishing him was to deprive him of their indispensable society; so they pulled down their miserable village and took it and themselves away.

The lovely soft sands stretching from the foot of the great red cliff into a clear, transparent sea gave delightful facilities for bathing. Built right into the sea was a *pagar*, a roofed shed raised on stakes, under which swimmers could disport themselves in the cool depths of delicious water, protected from the rays of the sun. A fairly large hut on the sands, sheltered by magnificent coco-nut trees, served as a dressing-room.

The parties at Ayer Manis got to be so popular, that the accommodations of the bungalow were taxed to their utmost limits. With the handiness of a sailor Northwood had some folding canvas cots made. When these were open iron rods fixed at the ends supported a mosquito curtain. When the bungalow was crowded the bedrooms were handed over to the ladies and elders of the party, while the bachelors camped out in the verandahs in their curtained

Ayer Manis

canvas cots, which were just as comfortable to sleep in as any bed. Anyone, however, who stumbled across the bungalow after bed-time would certainly think that it was a field hospital of some kind. People at Ayer Manis generally went to bed very late indeed, and rose shortly after daybreak. It was a very jolly life, enjoyed to the utmost when the Christmas and Easter holidays permitted of a more prolonged visit than usual.

The shooting parties were also capital fun. Great was Johnnie's delight when, having invited a party of officers from Admiral Duperré's flagship, the *Themis*, one of his guests killed a big deer with a fine shot, half an hour after the sportsmen had left the hospitable bungalow. The deer, after having been carefully stuffed with charcoal, was put on board the *Intan* in triumph, and sent straight away to the flagship. The next evening Johnnie had the pleasure of dining on board the *Themis*, to partake of a haunch of venison, superbly cooked by the admiral's *chef*.

At other times there were expeditions after wild pig, green pigeon, snipe, or plover, which gave plenty of healthy sport, besides providing game for the bungalow.

Ayer Manis was often in request by other people when the Northwoods did not want the place themselves. The Captain was by no means sorry to rent the bungalow on occasions, because it rather grieved him that the attractions of Ayer Manis should interfere with a proper and seemly attendance at church on Sundays. If Johnnie had had his way, the young heathen would have been at Ayer Manis every Sunday, and missed the interminable exhortations of the Chaplain altogether. But his father was the Secretary and Treasurer of the Presbyterian Kirk at Singapore, and took a very serious view of his duties. A more indefatigable person was surely never engaged in the uncongenial task of levying contributions for the new building fund of the day. So, little as he liked it, there were frequent occasions when Johnnie had to go to church with his parents twice on Sundays.

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The bungalow, in its lovely seclusion amidst palm-groves and sunlit seas, was in particular request with newly-wed couples desirous of spending their honeymoon in romantic and comfortable surroundings. As the years sped their way, observant people remarked that honeymoons at Ayer Manis invariably resulted in the happy couples being blessed at the proper interval with their first little boy or little girl.

CHAPTER XII

JOHNNIE NORTHWOOD STARTS BUSINESS ON HIS OWN ACCOUNT

YOUNG Northwood served some two years or more in Brownlow's office before he woke up to a realization of his rather dismal future in the service of the premier firm of Singapore. Finlay worked him very hard, but that was a mere detail. Johnnie discovered that however much he toiled, and whatever his aptitude for business might be, he had a poor chance against Brownlow's picked men with several years' seniority and experience at the back of them.

True, he had money behind him, but money was precisely the commodity which Brownlow and Co. had in superabundance. They wanted *men* and not money to carry out the finest business in the Straits Settlements to its highest development. In such circumstances a mere lad like young Northwood did not count for much, even if he were the possessor of millions.

It gradually dawned upon Johnnie's mind that he would become quite an old man of thirty, or perhaps a grey-bearded patriarch of thirty-five, with one foot in the grave, before he could hope to become a partner in Brownlow and Co. and inaugurate a new era of financial prosperity unprecedented in the annals of the illustrious firm.

So that while he laboured manfully at his work, without showing any symptom of slacking, Johnnie was getting very unhappy about his prospects. Nor was he quite in his place in Brownlow's office. As time went on, it seemed more or less an absurdity that a young fellow who lived

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in a mansion, and had all sorts of horses and carriages at his disposal, should serve as a clerk at fifty dollars a month. It had a disturbing effect on the whole office. Johnnie's pay stuck at fifty dollars, although he was worth a vast deal more, because it never occurred to Carlyle to increase the salary of a man to whom money was no object, and Johnnie and his father took precisely the same view of the matter. The whole position was not a natural one, and was bound, sooner or later, to prove untenable, notwithstanding the goodwill of the parties principally concerned. The meagre salary of fifty dollars by no means covered expenses, light as they were. Any efficient Eurasian clerk in the office drew more pay than Northwood. So at length Johnnie, getting tired of drawing doles from his father, suggested that he should get a specified monthly allowance, which should enable him to balance his budget on fixed lines. The Captain said he would consider the matter and give his decision the following day.

Next morning Captain Northwood strode into the Chartering Department of Messrs. Brownlow and Company's office, and flung a cheque-book on his son's desk. "Here you are, Johnnie! there's your cheque-book! I have just been to see Winton of the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank, and arranged with him that you are to draw on my account for as much as you want. Just take a specimen of your signature round to the Bank, and the thing's done. Mind, I trust to you to draw what you want in reason, without having to come to me every time you want a hundred or two hundred dollars, or whatever it may be!"

Before Johnnie had time to stammer out his thanks the Captain had shaken hands with Finlay and walked out of the office.

Finlay looked at Johnnie and his cheque-book, and said: "My word! I've never seen the like of this! If you don't ruin your father, or your father does not ruin you, I shall be much surprised. Get along with that charter-party in the meantime. I want it sharp!"

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

Truth to say, Johnnie, to his father's delight, made an exceedingly moderate use of his first cheque-book. He amused himself by writing out and signing cheques for quite small sums, just to feel what it was like to have a banking account.

But the story of the cheque-book soon got about. Brokers and others tried to tempt the young fellow into all sorts of speculations, but the fear of his father's displeasure effectually prevented him from falling into any trap of this kind. Some of his friends were more successful in borrowing various sums from him, which they did not always repay. He was thinking of buying a smart little phaeton which was on sale at Lambert's, when his plausible acquaintance, Mr. Harry Quickston, a most sporting person, persuaded him to lend him five hundred dollars, to be repaid in a week at the latest. Mr. Quickston bought the phaeton with Johnnie's money, for the express purpose, it would appear, of driving Mrs. Golightly about on fine mornings and evenings. Then, after a fortnight or so, he wearied of such a tame contrivance as a phaeton; sold it to a Chinaman for half its value, and then bought on credit a spanking dog-cart, which was standing in Abrams' yard, and with it a very fast mare, which enabled him to whirl Mrs. Golightly about the country at a tremendous pace.

When, long after the stipulated period, Johnnie ventured to ask the ever-hilarious Harry Quickston for his money, he was told in the most cheerful way possible that Abrams would really have to be paid first. As a matter of fact, neither Abrams nor Johnnie ever got a penny of their money, the Quickston finances becoming more abstruse with each succeeding race-meeting. This little transaction taught Johnnie a lesson for a little while, but he found it impossible to guard his cheque-book for any great length of time from the insidious attacks of many light-hearted gentlemen like Quickston, or the still more deadly approaches of solemn humbugs who wanted money for charitable purposes and kept it for themselves.

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Amongst others who had heard of Johnnie's cheque-book was Captain Shelby, of the barque *Ceylon*. In his quiet way he suggested that his young friend had had all the office training that he required, and that the Moluccas trade was ripe for the capitalist. There was, and had been for some time, a shortage of spices in the Singapore market. As a matter of fact they were bought up by Brownlow and Co. for their American trade. Johnnie knew that his firm was unable to execute pressing orders for first-class houses in San Francisco, because they preferred to ship all they could lay hands on to still more important clients of longer standing in New York and Boston. San Francisco offered a remarkable opening for any merchant able to secure spices, and Captain Shelby offered to buy them for him first hand in Amboina and Banda. The thing looked sound enough. Just then Captain Hardy arrived in his old ship, the *Victory*, from Amboina with four hundred piculs of cloves on board, amongst other cargo. These, after a hard bargain, he sold to Brownlow and Co. at forty-four and three-quarter dollars per picul. The old sailor confided to his friend, Northwood senior, that he had bought these identical four hundred piculs at sixteen dollars, and that he was off to buy another lot upon which he could lay hands at Amboina, the crop being unexpectedly large that year. Here was a profit of over one hundred and fifty per cent. on the deal—a clear eleven thousand dollars made on a little lot of some twenty-three tons of cloves. Captain Hardy could easily have bought another thousand piculs at the same rate, but he was afraid of throwing too great a quantity of cloves on the market at once, and had refrained from buying them. As Shelby pointed out to Johnnie, here was a profit of thirty thousand dollars thrown away because Hardy did not know the state of the market, and had been too unbusiness-like to take advantage of it. The whole thing seemed fabulous, and even the experienced Captain Northwood was singularly impressed with the amazing prospects of the Moluccas trade.

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

A short conference between the Captain and his son soon settled the whole matter. Northwood was essentially a man of rapid resolution, and he suddenly took the view that the life he had planned for his son with Jasper Mackenzie was a huge mistake, and that the promise in Captain Shelby's proposals outweighed all the distant prospects offered by Brownlow and Co.

While these matters were being anxiously discussed at Woodleigh, Captain Hardy was working night and day to get his old ship, the *Victory*, loaded up with rice, kerosene, cases of Dutch gin, and all sorts of odds and ends for the Moluccas trade. His son-in-law was at a standstill with his much faster barque, the *Ceylon*, because he had no ready cash for trading purposes, having put all his available money into the purchase of his vessel. The *Ceylon* had therefore to swing to her anchors in Singapore harbour, while she was very slowly loaded by Chinese traders, at their own leisure, at the best freights which Captain Shelby could get out of the shippers. Meanwhile, Captain Hardy, having all the money he wanted, was off in the *Victory* to reap a golden harvest.

Shelby tried very hard to get the Northwoods to advance him sufficient money to get him out of his difficulties, and to start him on a cruise in the Moluccas with an adequate capital. But on this point Captain Northwood was absolutely stubborn. It was his view that as Johnnie intended to sell in the San Francisco market, he should leave Brownlow and Co. before he ventured a penny on his own account. "All must be square and above board," insisted the Captain, "or Johnnie stays where he is!"

So Shelby had perforce to sail under the old conditions, it being promised that everything should be satisfactorily arranged on his return to Singapore.

Johnnie next resigned his post at Brownlow and Co.'s, where he had now been employed for three years. It was not without some emotion that he went round the office to shake hands with everybody on leaving the firm.

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Carlyle sincerely regretted losing him, and said so. Isaac Henson wished him every success, but told him he was a mere boy, and that the whole thing was an absurdity. Why didn't he stay where he was? "I hope," said Henson, "that you are not going to set up an Import Department! If you do, mind that you don't sell on three months' credit to everyone who wants your goods for nothing. And you might marry that nice girl Mary Hardy while you are about it, instead of playing the fool. Marriage might possibly steady you a bit. Good-bye!"

Mr. William Wapshot favoured him with several of his finest winks, while he implored him not to smash up the old firm, and reduce his friends in Brownlow's to poverty and misery.

Albuquerque and the other Eurasians either hinted mysteriously that the road to success lay in his securing their services as partners, or openly recommended a string of brothers and cousins as clerks possessing unusual business capacity. These simple persons had made up their minds that in some way or other Johnnie was just going to make millions.

As for John Finlay, he sighed grievously. "I hoped that we were going to row in the same boat for many a year to come. Well! you'll find some work for your cheque-book now! And I've got to break in a new junior—train another *kuda baru*! Come and see me whenever you have time, and do try to be careful with your father's money!"

Young Northwood started in business quietly enough. In a narrow lane on one side of John Small and Co.'s shop was a little row of one-storied buildings, in which they stored empty cases and lumber of sorts. Johnnie rented these unassuming premises on very moderate terms. A small white board nailed on one side of the office entrance had his name and the style of his firm painted on it in plain black letters thus:

JOHN DILLON NORTHWOOD, JUNIOR.

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

Such were the outward signs of the commencement of a new career.

In the very plainly furnished little office on the first floor there were two desks for his father and himself, while a space was railed off in a room below for his Chinese store-keeper and Chinese cashier.

Captain Northwood, who used to boast that he carried his office in his pocket, in the shape of a pocket-book and pencil, found it a great convenience to have a real office of his own at last, and was in great good humour over the whole affair. Meanwhile, Johnnie was busy corresponding with San Francisco, and a firm in Marseilles recommended to him by his friend, the Vicomte de Belleville. Oddly enough, his first transaction of any importance was with his old firm. On receipt of a certain cablegram from Marseilles the young man began quietly buying up all the Siam teelseed in the market. Having secured a large quantity of the stuff, he walked into Brownlow's office, and asked John Finlay to charter him a sailing ship for Marseilles. Finlay laughed and remarked that this was an unexpected pleasure, but nevertheless offered him the American barque *Anna Walsh*, at that time in Singapore harbour. Johnnie closed for her at one thousand five hundred pounds, and Finlay told him that he knew enough to see that the charter-party was in order, but he, Finlay, was curious to know how the venture would result.

There was a little dispute when the ship was half loaded and Johnnie wanted his bills of lading signed for the cargo actually on board. They were made out at twenty-seven shillings and sixpence, and Finlay declared that Johnnie could not possibly make a freight of one thousand five hundred pounds at such a low rate. In this Finlay was supported by Carlyle, who demanded a written guarantee from Johnnie that he would pay in cash any sum short of one thousand five hundred pounds before the ship sailed. Only on that condition would he allow the captain to sign bills of lading at twenty-seven shillings and sixpence.

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Johnnie gave the guarantee and studied the loading of the *Anna Walsh* with redoubled energy, and was constantly on board the ship. Great was his satisfaction when she was fully loaded to find that he had brought out his manifest to a total of one thousand five hundred and ninety pounds, and that both Carlyle and Finlay were out in their calculations.

His former chiefs were bound to admit that the *Anna Walsh* had been loaded exceedingly well, and they handed Johnnie back his letter of guarantee with remarks to the effect that they had taught him his business just a little too well. Captain Northwood was delighted with this proof of his son's energy and capacity.

In due course Captain Hardy returned from the Moluccas in the *Victory*, and when young Northwood, after a severe competition with Brownlow and Co., bought the whole lot of his spices at something over the market rate of the day, Carlyle began to think the young man a bit of a nuisance, especially when he found that the spices were being shipped to San Francisco. Still, it was all fair competition, and Carlyle took it in perfectly good part. He very kindly went to see Johnnie one day in his modest office, and told him that as his business was growing, he ought to become a member of the Exchange, Chamber of Commerce, and Singapore Club, and thus be able to meet the other merchants of the place on a footing of equality. Carlyle very generously offered to propose him as a member of all three of these institutions.

Johnnie very gratefully accepted Carlyle's offer as regards the Singapore Exchange, which would give him certain facilities for transacting shipping business which he wanted; but, bold and venturesome as he was in most respects, he was singularly shy in others, and refused to enter either the Chamber of Commerce or join the Club, on the score that his commercial status did not warrant his doing so. So he was duly elected a member of the Exchange, but never belonged to either the Chamber of

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

Commerce or the Club at which the magnates of Singapore take their tiffin and talk business.

Meanwhile, Captain Hardy had no idea of the arrangements which were on foot between the Northwoods and his son-in-law. The Northwoods were averse to competing with old Hardy, an objection which Shelby had overcome by promising to bring him into the combination. Shelby, however, had so urged secrecy as to their plans until they were actually carried into effect, that the Northwoods, much against their wish, agreed to leave Hardy in ignorance of what was being contemplated until a later day.

Shelby came back from his cruise, and called upon the Northwoods to make good their promises. It came as a shock to them to find that Shelby had mortgaged the *Ceylon* to McAlister and Co., and owed them a lot of money for supplies of all kinds. There was no help for it but to pay off Shelby's various debts and put the man on a sound footing, besides advancing him the funds necessary for the spice trade. It was a much stiffer pull on their finances than the Northwoods had ever anticipated.

Another severe check to the whole Moluccas scheme came to pass with the arrival of Captain Hardy in the *Victory*.

When Northwood placed the Shelby scheme in all its details before his old friend, he found, to his astonishment, that Hardy would have nothing to do with the affair under any consideration whatever. The bluff old sailor, who was in ample funds at the time, declared that he intended to remain his own master, and had no intention of being dragged into any combination by his precious son-in-law. Hardy solemnly warned Northwood to have a care concerning his former mate, whom he described as being "the bight and both ends of a rogue!"

However, there was no bad blood between either Northwood or Hardy over the affair. The latter said that there was ample room for ten ships in the trade, and that in

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any case Shelby could be trusted to hang himself directly he got enough rope.

These were not precisely comfortable reflections for the Northwoods, but they considered themselves bound to Shelby, and their Borneo trade was so phenomenally prosperous at the time, that a prospective loss of a few thousand dollars more or less in the Moluccas did not much matter. On the other hand, Shelby might prove to be right in spite of all appearances, in which case they would make yet another fortune—not that it would be of any earthly use to them when they had got it.

So the Northwoods decided to pay off Shelby's debts, and start him afresh with ample funds. Shelby was careful not to betray the slightest satisfaction over his vastly altered circumstances, but contented himself with tranquilly assuring the Northwoods that he would give them a royal return on their money. As a matter of fact, he kept his word up to a certain point. Exceedingly clever, but utterly unscrupulous, Shelby managed to show astonishing profits on his very first voyage he made in the *Ceylon*. According to the agreement he got one-third of the nett profits as well as his wages as master, which paid him vastly better, as he said, than carrying cargo for Chinamen.

Meanwhile, father and son were piling on canvas at a tremendous rate. The *Alastor* was clearly getting too small for the Borneo trade, so Captain Northwood ordered a new steamer of considerably greater tonnage through Brownlow and Co. This he named the *Brunei*. He also bought a small steamer called the *Augusta*, to run on the Borneo coast, and finally he bought a very beautiful yacht, the *Flower of Yarrow*, for something like five hundred pounds, by auction, at Powell's rooms. Built at Cowes, she had been purchased by a pearling concern, familiarly known as "The Champagne Company," from her noble owner for some fifteen thousand pounds. The yacht was sent from Australia to Singapore to recruit native divers,



VIEWS OF SULU.

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

when the Champagne Company, having done things on too magnificent a scale throughout, came to an end of their resources and "went bust." By the order of some official liquidator she was put up for auction at Singapore, with the result that Captain Northwood got this lovely boat for next to nothing, as she stood. After sailing her about Singapore for a few weeks, he sent her to North Borneo and Sulu, where she was once more employed in pearling.

Finding that his Labuan property was returning him a very handsome income, Captain Northwood began buying land and houses in Singapore, and building in various directions. These operations, being carried out with great judgment and skill, soon began to yield the handsome results anticipated. The Northwood estate in Singapore rapidly developed itself into a splendid property.

Johnnie, on his side, was forging ahead with a rapidity which was almost disconcerting to himself. His modest little offices were getting too small for him, and his landlords, John Small and Co., complained that the pans of pitch, with which he sealed up the joints of his nutmeg-boxes, gave off an intolerable reek, which annoyed their customers and damaged their goods. Would he be so kind as to stop boiling pitch or go somewhere else? It was impossible for our young merchant to dispense with his pitch-pans, so he began to look out for other quarters. At this juncture old Mr. Whoever, of Whoever and Co., offered him a large block of buildings in Battery Road, on a long lease. Whoever said he was tired of business, and having made enough money to keep him comfortably at home, he meant to retire. Johnnie looked over the buildings, and was aghast at their size; they were nearly as big as the Brownlow buildings on the Quay. Old Whoever pointed out to young Northwood that he could always sublet premises in such a central position, and proved that he made quite a nice income by pressing and storing gambier for other merchants without risking a cent. As Whoever offered to sell his hydraulic press and dispose of his lease on very

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favourable conditions Johnnie closed with him, and, to John Small and Co.'s great relief, transferred himself and his business to the big godowns in the Battery Road.

People began to open their eyes, and some of them to shake their heads at all of these developments; but the general opinion was entirely in favour of the Northwoods. It was thought that the successful captain was much too sagacious and sensible a man to undertake anything which was really risky, while his son gave the impression of being a very energetic young fellow, a veritable "chip of the old block."

The Northwoods' credit stood very high indeed. It is true that the old French tapioca-planter, Monsieur Chassepôt, who made a point of dining once a week at Woodleigh, and grumbling vigorously throughout the whole of a most excellent meal, had sarcastically dubbed the Captain "*le Marquis de Carabas*," and predicted his ultimate downfall with a cheerful certainty which events did not seem to justify. Captain Northwood cared nothing for the Frenchman's vaticinations. He liked the old planter, and was very glad that Johnnie should be able to go shooting at times over Chassepôt's very fine estate, in the company of his two sons, who were both very nice fellows.

Another extension of young Northwood's business necessitated his proceeding to England *viâ* France. The principal export of Labuan is sago-flour, of which the *Alastor* brought across some thousands of tons in the course of the year. Sago is one of the finest foods ever produced by nature, but modern ingenuity treats this starch with chemicals and turns it either into glucose for brewing purposes or into size for linens. Whole forests of sago-palms are cut down every year in the interests of beer and bleaching, but they happen to be practically inexhaustible.

Johnnie Northwood had already been shipping sago-flour to London to the British Patent Sugar Company, and was desirous of getting the monopoly of their business, which would give him a commanding position in this important

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

market. His London agent, Mr. Walter Forsyth, urged him repeatedly to proceed to London and negotiate personally with the Directors of the Patent Sugar Company concerning the supplies of their raw material. Northwood's Marseilles interests also demanded his personal investigation. His office was now manned by a regular staff of clerks, and it was arranged that Johnnie should make a flying visit to Europe, while his father remained in charge at Singapore. He was sorry to part with his father and mother, and to leave his beautiful home at Woodleigh ; but, at the same time, he yearned to see France and England once more.

After a very agreeable passage in the Messageries Maritimes steamer *Yangtse*, Johnnie arrived at Marseilles on a certain December day. He was met on board the steamer by M. de Beauregard, a fine handsome old gentleman, who brought with him Madame de Beauregard, her two pretty daughters, and his only son Jules. Johnnie at the end of a few days seemed to have known the family for years. They were very charming people, with a circle of delightful acquaintances, amongst whom he found life to be full of gaiety and innocent pleasures. He fell considerably in love with both the de Beauregard girls, and would undoubtedly have married one of them had he been able to discover definitely whether he was desperately enamoured of Martha, or whether it was her younger sister Louise who inspired him with a fervid passion.

Meanwhile, he worked hard during office hours, and wrote fully by every mail to his Singapore office, as well as to his father and mother. He spent the rest of his time in a round of delicious dinners, followed by little dances with pretty partners, varied by occasional theatre and concert parties. M. de Beauregard had a magnificent cellar, and initiated Johnnie into the mysteries of appreciating fine old Burgundies by methods both practical and agreeable.

With something of a struggle, Johnnie tore himself away

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from Marseilles. To most people Marseilles may be a sufficiently prosaic and even malodorous port. But to Johnnie it had an intimate and infinitely more gracious aspect. Marseilles also recalled to him the happy days with his father and mother, when they made all sorts of pleasant excursions together.

From the enchanting town of Marseilles, Johnnie found his way to London, and set to work with his agent, Walter Forsyth. In due course Mr. John Dillon Northwood, junior, was introduced to the Managing Director and the other directors of the British Patent Sugar Company, and various persons of importance. All these gentlemen were vastly astonished at the extreme youth of their Singapore correspondent, but in the end they had to admit that he knew all about sago-flour, and that he had a privileged position on a part of the Borneo coast, thanks to his father's enterprise. Finally, he had the satisfaction of leaving London with the assured monopoly of the huge business of the British Patent Sugar Company. A more experienced man of business would probably have seen to it that the terms of the agreement were less elastic, but those were brilliant times for Northwood junior, who, trusting to his energy and ability, felt like sweeping everything before him.

Johnnie naturally saw as much as possible of his dear old friends the Leigh family, and after a delightful fortnight in Marseilles, sailed for Singapore in the Messageries Maritimes liner *Salazie*.

After a splendid and most enjoyable passage, the *Salazie* steamed through the beautiful new harbour of Singapore, and took her berth at the Borneo Wharf. As the steamer neared the wharf, Johnnie distinguished the tall figure of his father towering over the heads of a small group of people, and noticed that he held a white bag in one hand. Captain Northwood was one of the first to gain the mail-boat's deck, and greeted his son with hearty effusion. When they got to the saloon, he threw the bag on the table, on which it fell with a metallic chink.

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

“I thought you might want some money,” said the worthy captain, “and so I have brought these dollars with me.”

Johnnie was much touched with his father's kind forethought. He grasped his father's hand as he said: “You are really too good to me; as a matter of fact, I owe some money on board, and shall be delighted to pay off my little debts before leaving the ship.”

The Captain laughed cheerily. “Young men generally want money, don't they? I thought I could hardly go wrong in bringing some dollars with me.”

As a matter of fact, Johnnie had been beguiled into playing cards on the long voyage, and being a very poor hand at that particular form of gambling, had lost various sums, which, though of no great importance, were more than enough to exhaust the cash he had taken on board with him at Marseilles.

Captain Northwood's horses took him and his son rapidly to Woodleigh, where Johnnie was tenderly greeted by his mother. The rest of the day was spent in all sorts of questions and answers about Johnnie's adventures and successes in France and England, and in telling him what had happened during his absence.

The next day the Northwoods, father and son, drove early to their office, of which Johnnie at once took charge, settling down to work with his accustomed vigour. The Captain relinquished his command with great relief, and announced his intention of going to Borneo on the next voyage of the *Alastor*.

The situation all round looked healthy and prosperous, though it seemed a little difficult to understand Captain Shelby's tactics. He continued to show very large profits on paper, but kept back the surpluses for investment in the Spice Islands. He had put his chief officer in command of the *Ceylon*, while he remained at Amboina to collect her cargo for her. He argued that it was no use to continue the old system of making a ship a sort of floating shop and

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warehouse, first selling the rice and cloth, and so on, and then starting in to buy spices and gums for her. Shelby wrote that such a system might suit Captain Hardy, who had sailed the old *Victory* on this plan for the last forty years, but it was easy to see that with a store on shore where goods could be kept during a vessel's cruise, and into which her cargo could be landed immediately on arrival, the *Ceylon* could sail two voyages to one of the *Victory* or any other ship in the trade, with profits proportionately increased.

Shelby also begged most urgently that the Northwoods would send him a small brig or schooner, to trade between Amboina and the other islands, and especially to bring gum copal from the Papuan coast.

Captain Northwood remarked that when they first began this trade, Shelby handed them back their money punctually at the end of the voyage plus a profit of some thirty per cent., which was a very agreeable way of doing business. But now Shelby was putting up buildings in Amboina, and keeping back their money to pay for them. True, he promised a return of cent. per cent. when all was in full swing; "but," said Northwood sagaciously, "thirty per cent. on the old-fashioned lines is quite good enough for me, or any other sailorman!"

Both of the Northwoods, however, were struck by the sensible and apparently secure lines on which Shelby proposed to base his trade. In the end, and after looking into their bank account and their resources generally, they decided to support Shelby's scheme, and to send him the small sailing ship for which he asked. Before many days their house-flag was flying over a smart and strongly-built schooner, which they re-christened the *Amboina*, and which they immediately started to load with an assortment of cargo suitable for the New Guinea trade. In due course she sailed for the Moluccas under the command of a decent skipper, named Murphy.

There was just one phrase in Shelby's correspondence

Johnnie Northwood starts Business on his own Account

which grated somewhat painfully. He wrote of "washing out all his competitors." Captain Northwood remarked that if Shelby intended to monopolize the entire trade of the islands, he was taking on a big job, which would require a big bank behind it. Nor did he want to see his old friend Captain Hardy "washed out" of his own trade. However, he finally made up his mind that it was some of Shelby's "Yankee bluff," and thought no more about it.

CHAPTER XIII

ABOUT POLITICS IN BORNEO

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD had always taken a practical part in the politics of Borneo, being a supporter of the Sultan of Brunei. Of course, there was not much good to be said of the Sultan's Government, but he, at least, had a right to the throne, and his rule was quite respectable compared to that of other Borneo princes. Northwood had known the day when the Sultan was a power in the land; but as his prestige was weakened, and as his authority declined, so did anarchy and disorder spread through his dominions. The wisest course would have been to hand over the kingdom of Brunei to the Rajah of Sarawak, in the interests of peace and prosperity; but there were many difficulties in the way of such a prompt and satisfactory solution of the problem. The Home Government would certainly veto anything so sensible.

Meanwhile, the Sultan, always short of money wherewith to maintain his army of retainers and his hundreds of wives, was becoming an object of interest to various gentlemen desirous of getting concessions cheap and selling them dear.

The Sultan had already offered Northwood a concession over a huge district containing coal mines, petroleum, and other valuable properties; but the Captain refused to accept it. He realized that if he took up such a concession, the administration of a considerable part of the Sultan's territories would fall on his shoulders, and become the burden of his life. He could, of course, take the concession and sell it again, but he had no experience of



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company-mongering, and the whole scheme failed to offer any attraction to the sailor. As he said, he had quite enough to look after as it was.

Two or three adventurers now presented themselves at the Court of Brunei with gifts and proposals. The former were promptly accepted, while the latter were considered with such infinite deliberation as to break the heart of the boldest concession-hunter. An American gentleman seemed to have some chance of success, but his influence waned; and Captain Northwood, who strongly disapproved of American influence in Brunei, did his utmost to bring about his discomfiture.

Then came the most formidable man of all, who really looked as if he would carry everything before him. The Austrian Baron Overbeck was a man gifted with both courage and ability, and had considerable means at his disposal. It was his avowed intention to interest the Austrian Government in a really great and comprehensive scheme for colonizing and developing a vast region of Borneo.

That any part of the island should pass under the domination of Austria appeared to Northwood absolutely intolerable. Apart from purely patriotic motives, which had a very strong hold indeed on the British captain, he saw in his mind's eye the country overrun by Austrians and Germans, with unfortunate results to himself. Northwood had been waging war against the Baron for the last two or three years, but the clever Austrian had succeeded in getting various concessions from different native chiefs for considerations which the Captain thought miserably inadequate. About this business he expressed his opinions with sailor-like freedom. The Baron had not only gained a position of some influence at the Court of Brunei, but to Northwood's amazement he had to all appearance been successful in getting some measure of approval to his scheme from the Governor of Labuan, Mr. William Hood, afterwards better known as Sir William Hood, K.C.M.G.

Between Mr. Hood and Captain Northwood there was

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friendship of long standing. Both were men of unusual ability and integrity, and, therefore, perfectly able to understand one another.

The fact that Mr. Hood had been in London for the last year prevented Northwood from discussing matters with His Excellency, and in the Governor's absence, the Baron was able to pursue his campaign without any effective check upon his movements.

Northwood then resolved to place his views before the then Secretary of State, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and to that end drafted a letter of considerable length, in which he expressed his view of the situation with force and ability. On leaving for one of his voyages, Northwood handed his draft letter to Johnnie, with instructions to make a fair copy of it and forward it to London. He had his father's authority to sign it "John Dillon Northwood." The signature was common to both of them, and the Captain did not see that it much mattered. Johnnie thought it a very good letter, but objected that it did not offer any criticism of Governor Hood's apparently benevolent consideration of the Austrian Baron's designs.

"Well, perhaps you might put in something about Hood's weakness at this juncture. I think myself that Hood is too young to cope with such a singularly experienced and diplomatic person as the Baron. You might roast Hood a bit, but mind you don't say anything unjust about a fine fellow, who has happened to make a mistake."

Johnnie saw his father off by the *Alastor*, and then set to work on his diplomatic job with unholy glee. He held all his father's views on the situation in Borneo, intensified and inflamed by the hot-blooded and purely partisan spirit of extreme youth. He saw in Baron Overbeck a sort of Austrian Mephistopheles, inspired with the fell design of seducing the hapless Governor of Labuan, and subverting British interests for the benefit of an alien empire. Happily, he thought, the Northwoods were there to defend British interests in Borneo!

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Animated by these noble ideas, Johnnie went to work to engross his father's draft letter in his finest handwriting on the best and thickest foolscap money could procure. It was a labour of love. When he got to the end of his father's draft, he exercised his discretionary power with regard to the unhappy Governor of Labuan. Having a great idea of his literary style, he fairly let himself go in describing the youthful and innocent Governor as the hapless victim of the old and diplomatic Baron. With a final suggestion to the Secretary of State that a more experienced hand than that of Mr. William Hood was wanted at this critical moment to control the destinies of Borneo, Johnnie completed his task to his infinite satisfaction. Having signed the letter, he carefully sealed it up in a parchment envelope, and sent it as a registered packet to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. He *was* pleased with himself!

It mattered nothing to him that in the letter which he had signed, he had described himself as "a shipowner trading on the Borneo coast for the last thirty years." That was a mere detail. That on his own account, but in his father's name, he should deplore the youth and inexperience of a man both older and wiser than himself was another detail. He had merely mixed himself and his father up in a most satisfactory and exhilarating way. Of course, he kept no copy of the letter he had posted.

Captain Northwood, on his return from Labuan, seemed rather to have lost interest in this letter. Johnnie gushed to him a good deal about it, but his father said it was all waste of time, as no soul in the Colonial Office or anywhere else would ever read it, and paid no more heed to the thing.

Meanwhile, the two Northwoods were walking about Singapore, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Johnnie's letter had been printed in a Blue Book, and that Governor Hood's attention had been drawn to it in a most pointed manner by a personage of some importance!

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In due course, Mr. Hood left Southampton by a P. and O. steamer; but as his presence was urgently required at Labuan, the British gunboat *Alert* was ordered to take His Excellency to his destination immediately on his arrival at Singapore.

Mr. Hood ordinarily travelled between Singapore and Labuan by the *Alastor*. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of Captain Northwood to learn that the Governor had passed through Singapore without his knowledge. Why did not Hood, at least, give him some indication of his movements in the usual friendly way? This was a problem insoluble to Captain Northwood.

Meanwhile, as Johnnie was absent in Europe, it severely taxed Captain Northwood to give the necessary attention to rapidly growing interests in Singapore and the Spice Islands. Perforce, he had to leave his Borneo trade to his agents, and he felt instinctively that all sorts of developments were taking place in the island of which he had no trustworthy information. This agent at Labuan, Mr. Gritz, was a handsome, plausible man, of about thirty years of age, whom Northwood had picked up cheap, partly because he was taken by his good looks, and partly because Gritz was in trouble of sorts, including a plentiful lack of cash. Gritz, in spite of his queer name, happened to be an Englishman.

This man, as Northwood's agent, did not display much zeal on his employer's behalf. He was lazy and indifferent, and, rightly or wrongly, Northwood suspected him of being influenced by Baron Overbeck. Ultimately Gritz left Northwood's service, which, however, proved a stepping stone to much higher destinies. Northwood similarly made the fortunes of many men, deserving and otherwise, during the course of his career.

When Johnnie returned from Europe, the Captain was at last free to attend to his beloved Borneo, and after a phenomenally long absence he once more set foot in Labuan. When he called at Government House he was amazed at

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the cool and exceedingly official reception accorded to him by Mr. Hood. He could not understand this at all, and finally asked the Governor for the reason of such a marked change in their relations. Hood looked at the Captain with some surprise. He said that he was not bound to give any explanation, but when Northwood chose to write a letter to the Colonial Secretary, which was not only unfriendly in its tone throughout, but actually ended by suggesting that a certain Mr. William Hood was too young and inexperienced to be the Governor of Labuan, and should be replaced by a more capable man, it seemed about time that friendly relations ceased. Northwood was absolutely free to do as he pleased in these matters, but he could scarcely demand the dismissal of a Governor and keep up his personal friendship at the same moment.

Northwood swore that he had never written any such letter, whereupon Hood, who began to doubt his visitor's sanity, put a Blue Book before him and opened it at a certain page. After a short interval he said drily to Northwood: "I don't suppose there are *two* John Dillon Northwoods who have been trading on the Borneo coast for the last thirty years, are there?"

The Captain at last understood the situation, and explained to the astonished Governor that there really *were* two Dromios. "It's that blessed son of mine!" he said with much vexation. "You can see for yourself that I never wrote that bosh at the end of the letter!"

Hood, having learnt that Johnnie was barely over twenty when he wished to overturn governors on the score of their youth, advised the Captain to have a care of his son. He suggested keeping Johnnie in a nice airy cage, in which he could enjoy himself without hurting other people. Or, as an alternative, he thought that a good stout rattan applied with the necessary frequency and vigour might benefit the budding statesman to a marked extent. The Captain, though inwardly furious over the whole affair, had to join in the laugh against his son. Hood asked him to

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dinner, and the old friendship between the two men was renewed, to last until Northwood's death.

After dinner they sat and talked on the verandah of Government House. Northwood learned that Baron Overbeck had found, on his return to Vienna, that his Government positively denied him the recognition and support essential to the success of his scheme. A British group in London then offered to take over the Baron's concessions on terms which the disappointed Overbeck was glad enough to accept, and thus vanished the dream of Austrian domination in Borneo. A British Chartered Company was now in course of formation with the aid of such eminent men as Sir Harry Keppel, Sir Alfred Dent, and others. The Governorship of the new territory had already been offered to Hood, and he had practically decided to accept it. Mr. Gritz was very keen on joining the Chartered Company's service and had therefore left his employer in ignorance of a movement which had been kept as private as possible. Of course, Northwood would have been admitted into a certain circle had it not been for the letter to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, which had unfavourably impressed certain persons in London, who had heard a good deal about the Captain without knowing him personally.

After all, no great harm was done if Northwood would cheerfully accept certain facts and assist the new company in opening up their territory by providing the steamers wanted for the posts which would shortly be opened for trading purposes. Otherwise the company would have to make their own arrangements for providing tonnage or to invite competition. But Northwood was quite willing to do what was required. Had he not a new steamer building at home, especially designed for the coast? As for Mr. Gritz, if the company or anybody else wanted him, they were welcome to him. He was not going to make any trouble on the score of Mr. Gritz.

The Captain, having completed his business in Labuan



[Photo by permission of]

THE CHARTERED COMPANY'S MOUNTED POLICE.

[The British North Borneo Co.]

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and Brunei, returned to Singapore. Poor Johnnie was immensely discomfited over his despatch to Sir Michael, which had come home to roost in such an unexpected manner. "I don't see much use in putting me in a cage," said the much humiliated diplomatist; "but if either Hood or you think I want a good licking, I'll have a bout at singlesticks with John Grinston, which will come to exactly the same thing."

His father noted that this incident acted as a sort of wholesome tonic on his son, who seemed to rather be in want of a good dose of some moral medicine.

Very shortly afterwards the Chartered Company of British North Borneo, with a capital of a million sterling, was announced, whose task was to govern and develop a country extending over an area of some thirty thousand square miles. Sir Alfred Dent and Sir Walter Medhurst arrived from China to confer with Mr. W. H. Read, the highly esteemed senior of the old firm of A. L. Johnston Co., who had been appointed the Singapore agents of the Chartered Company. Captain Northwood was in frequent consultation with these gentlemen, and finally sailed in the *Alastor* with Sir Walter Medhurst.

Events now moved rapidly. Under an arrangement with the Colonial Office, Mr. Hood was appointed the first Governor of the new State, Mr. Gritz becoming a member of his staff. The Governor fixed upon Kudat, situated in a bay of that name, as the site of his capital, and it was settled that Captain Northwood should prolong his voyages to that port.

CHAPTER XIV

JOHNNIE NORTHWOOD'S FIRST EXPEDITION

YOUNG Northwood, as time advanced, got his firm into good working order with a small but efficient staff. His right-hand man was Enrico Busoni, a smart young Italian who was faithful and sincere. Busoni held a responsible position in a great German house which suddenly went smash as a consequence of over-speculation in gambier. Northwood was only too glad to get the services of Busoni. Mr. Fuller, of Brownlow and Co., had induced Northwood to allow him to send for his brother, who, accordingly, turned up and joined the office in Battery Road. The younger Fuller proved to be smart enough at his work ; but he unfortunately had a taste for fast life, though this characteristic did not exhibit itself to its full extent until later. The book-keeping department was in the charge of Mr. Antony Arratoon, a young Armenian gentleman, who obtained his billet thanks to the influence of his uncle with Captain Northwood. Tony was a first-class book-keeper, thoroughly honest, and a very pleasant-mannered person, albeit touchy concerning his personal dignity. There was, of course, the usual team of Eurasian and Chinese copying clerks, and native tambies, or office servants and messengers. The offices themselves were spacious, airy, and simply but very suitably furnished. The offices downstairs were entirely under the control of Koh Say Kiat, a quiet, capable, and faithful Chinaman, who selected the cashier and staff of weighing clerks from amongst his own friends, and

Johnnie Northwood's First Expedition

was personally responsible for them. It was a very mixed staff to manage, but the Northwoods were very good masters to serve, and knew exactly how to handle their people. A thoroughly good feeling reigned throughout the Battery Road establishment, with the result that the work was well done and in a friendly spirit.

The *Brunei*, when she arrived from England, proved to be a satisfactory steamer in every way. Captain Fletcher, who had brought her out, and Mr. John Brown, his chief engineer, were confirmed in their appointment. Old Captain Hall was ordered to hand over the command of the *Alastor* to his chief officer, Mr. Bird, very much to his disgust. Hall had been a steady and capable skipper throughout, but he had availed himself so thoroughly of the many opportunities of making money for himself in the Borneo trade that he not only had a very comfortable balance at his bankers, but also some remarkably nice investments in property.

He had got quite out of hand, and it was so evident that he considered his command of the *Alastor* merely as a convenience for his own ends, without the slightest idea of serving his employer's interests, that he had become quite impossible.

On his dismissal, Hall went about Singapore trying to get up a company to compete with Captain Northwood in the Borneo trade, but people with money were not slow to recognize the real facts of the case, and Hall's prospectus being very much of the "heads I win, tails you lose" order, he met with nothing but mortification and disappointment.

Another disagreeable incident which happened at this time was the defection of Washington Clarke, the supercargo of Northwood's coasting steamer, the *Fairy Queen*. This gentleman had had the management of the *Fairy Queen* entirely in his own hands, as she never came to Singapore. It is true that Gritz, as the local agent at Labuan, was supposed to see that Clarke ran the trade

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on right lines, but he had other fish to fry, and let Clarke do exactly as he pleased. The *Fairy Queen* had never been a paying proposition, albeit she steamed about the Borneo coast loaded to her utmost capacity, and in the normal course of business ought to have returned a handsome profit to her owner. However, "out of sight, out of mind" is an old story, especially with shipowners, and it now came out that Washington Clarke had saved enough money to buy a larger and faster steamer than the *Fairy Queen*, and to compete with his old master. Clarke was a fine, showy kind of man, a most delightfully plausible person, gifted with a good deal of ability of a certain sort, and, like Captain Hall, had a remarkably keen eye for the main chance.

Such a man was merely Northwood's supercargo exactly as long as it suited him. To learn the trade at Northwood's expense, and then to cut into it on his own account was the sort of business which fitted Clarke's moral calibre to a nicety. The new Chartered Company gave him his chance, and Clarke took it.

Matters were getting a bit complicated, and they were made none the simpler by the arrival of Shelby as a passenger in the *Ceylon* about a fortnight before the *Brunei* dropped her anchor in Singapore harbour. Shelby brought with him an unusually valuable cargo of spices, gums, shells, and other produce, all of which showed a handsome profit; but he also brought with him schemes involving a further large call on Northwood's funds.

Shelby had amply justified his permanent establishment and warehouses at Amboina. As he had predicted, the *Ceylon* had been easily able to make two voyages to one of the *Victory*, because she was not laid up in port for weeks together, but despatched on her return voyage in the course of a few days. He kept his eyes and ears wide open while he sat at his desk in the Battery Road office. He had too much tact to rush his proposals until

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he knew his ground, but when the time came he pushed home his attack for all he was worth.

He now insisted that the time had come to put a steamer on the Moluccas trade as well as the sailing ships. He also asserted that he could sell the *Fairy Queen* for double her value to a wealthy Dutch merchant of Ternate, and yet keep her employed as a tender to the *Alastor*, which he urged the Northwoods to utilize in his trade. Lastly, he demanded the establishment of a firm to be called Northwood and Shelby, to open up the trade on regular business-like lines.

These were large proposals, which required careful consideration. The Northwoods had so many irons in the fire that they did not concentrate themselves as they should have done on the Borneo trade.

Johnnie, whose fighting instinct was ever at the top, proposed to take strong measures against Washington Clarke, whose conduct he strongly resented. The ex-supercargo of the *Fairy Queen* had rendered no proper account of his stewardship before sending in his resignation. Johnnie proposed bringing an action against him, and arresting his steamer in the meantime. More than one person was asking how Clarke found sufficient money to purchase a steamer.

Unluckily, Captain Northwood, who carried generosity to an absolute fault, disliked the idea of anything which savoured of persecution, and further, he had a sailor-like horror of lawyers and legal proceedings. He made another mistake in under-estimating his enemy, and said with cheerful sincerity: "Give the beggar enough rope and he'll hang himself!"

So Mr. Washington Clarke was allowed all the rope he wanted. In the end, instead of hanging himself, he proved himself to be a particularly expert climber of the rope!

Captain Northwood, as might have been expected from a man whose career had been a long history of continued success, formed his decisions very rapidly, and expected

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his orders to be carried into effect immediately. Calling Shelby and his son into the office tiffin-room one afternoon, he explained his plan of campaign. It was quite clear that there was a shortage of rice and kerosene in the Moluccas. Also that stocks of coal for the use of the Dutch gunboats patrolling the Spice Islands and the New Guinea coast were now exhausted. It was urgent, therefore, that the *Ceylon* should get back to Amboina at the earliest date possible. She was already partly loaded with cargo for the return voyage, and would now be worked day and night, leaving the No. 1 hold empty. The *Brunei* would then tow her to Labuan, eight hundred miles on her journey, and the *Ceylon*, having filled up her spare hold with coal, would proceed under sail to Amboina. Johnnie was to leave in the *Alastor* two or three days after the departure of the *Brunei* with a further cargo, with which to relieve the urgent necessities of the Moluccas market. At Labuan he would find the *Fairy Queen*, and it was left entirely to Johnnie's discretion whether he would continue to employ her on the Borneo coast, or send her for sale to Ternate. In the latter event she would load with coal at Labuan. As for the proposed partnership, that would be a matter for consideration after Johnnie's return from the Moluccas. The quarterly mail-boat being on the point of sailing for the Moluccas, Northwood proposed that Shelby should take a passage by the Dutch packet, so as to arrive in Amboina before Johnnie would be there with the *Alastor*.

It can be easily imagined that Shelby had nothing but approval for Northwood's programme, while his son supported it enthusiastically.

Johnnie dreamed golden dreams that night. At last he was to shake off the shackles of office-work, and sail at the head of a veritable expedition, invested with full powers to act as he pleased. At last he was to see the forgotten Borneo coast, and behold the enchanting treasure-laden Spice Islands. Never was such a happy mortal !



A VIEW OF LABUAN.

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One fine morning he sailed in the *Alastor* on his first expedition, and four days afterwards arrived at Labuan. He was delighted with the noble harbour, but the town of Labuan itself seemed to be a very mean and ramshackle place. The wooden wharves and untidy godowns looked as if they were falling to pieces. The long rows of badly whitewashed "shophouses" in the dirty road facing the sea belonged to his father, and a precious poor kind of property they looked. But this dismal, cheap-looking place was swarming with activity. Piles of cargo were being handled in all directions. Chinese towkays, fat or lean, yelled at their gangs of coolies, all sorts of natives were unloading their prahus and carrying their cargoes of rattans, trepang, birds' nests, beeswax, rubber, etc., to the shophouses across the road, to be traded to the Chinese for cloth, brass-wire, beads, powder and shot, gin, and such other articles as might suit their fancy. The Chinese were doing a roaring trade and making a huge profit out of it. As for sago-flour, it seemed to be everywhere. There were boatloads of it alongside the *Brunei*, there were thousands of sacks of the stuff piled up in the wharves and in the godowns behind. Its finely divided particles floated through the air. In a yard some little distance from the wharves a herd of cattle were awaiting shipment to Singapore.

Johnnie now understood that there was money in Labuan. The whole trade of the place went through his father's hands. The Chinese might exchange cheap goods for valuable produce, but it all paid freight one way or the other to Captain Northwood. As for sago-flour, there was more of it waiting shipment than the *Brunei* could load, although she was half as big again as the *Alastor*.

Labuan harbour, usually so deserted, was particularly animated. There were the *Brunei*, *Alastor*, *Ceylon*, *Fairy Queen*, and the *Flower of Yarrow* just in with a cargo of pearl-shell from Sulu, all flying the Northwoods' house-

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flag. People told Johnnie that such a sight had never been seen in Labuan harbour before, and he naturally felt a little pride in his position at the moment. There was quite a fleet, which he could move about exactly as he chose! There was one blot on the picture in the shape of one steamer too many, a rather good-looking boat called the *Sultan*, which flew the newly invented house-flag of Mr. Washington Clarke.

The European population of Labuan was a very small one indeed, and apparently much given to drinking whiskies and sodas on board the *Alastor* and elsewhere.

The Chinese and native traders hailed Johnnie as an old friend, many of them insisting that they knew him when he was a little lad on board the *Samson*. But there was a sense of disappointment, which no one attempted to conceal, that Captain Northwood had not come himself on the occasion of his new steamer the *Brunei* arriving at Labuan for the first time.

Johnnie called at Government House, where Mr. Hood received him with civility, but without much cordiality. Until his successor arrived from home, Hood was still Governor of Labuan, while directing the affairs of the new State.

Hood was also disappointed that Captain Northwood had not come himself instead of sending his son. Sir Walter Medhurst, who looked in just then, said that it was perfectly ridiculous. Hood asked whether Johnnie had been writing any more letters to Her Majesty's Ministers, whereupon Sir Walter laughed mirthlessly and left the room. Johnnie began to feel a few of the difficulties of a situation which seemed so full of charm a few minutes earlier. However, the Governor accepted Johnnie's invitation to a tiffin-party on board the *Brunei* next day, and asked him to dine at Government House the same evening. He said also that he wished to pay a visit to certain points on the coast with Sir Walter Medhurst, and trusted that Johnnie would kindly detach one

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of the vessels of his fleet for this particular service. On Johnnie assuring the Governor that he had the greatest desire to serve the State of British North Borneo in every possible way, he was asked to make an appointment with Mr. Gritz, who would give him all particulars. Gritz, who was in the adjoining office, offered to drive back with Johnnie to the *Alastor* and talk things over quietly.

Under the double awnings over the quarter-deck of the *Alastor*, Gritz and Johnnie sat in comfortable cane chairs, with the inevitable whiskies and sodas close at hand. The grilling heat of Labuan was conducive to a certain feeling of languor and sleepiness. Johnnie, whose energies and feelings had been a bit overtaxed since his arrival in Labuan, felt as if he would like to take things easily for a short space, until Gritz woke him up with a horrid shock.

He explained to the luckless Johnnie that he made a shocking poor substitute for his father in a moment of crisis. As Mr. Hood and Sir Walter Medhurst wished to visit the Northern ports, Gritz recommended Johnnie to put his largest and most comfortable steamer at their disposal. To this Johnnie demurred. The *Brunei* was partly loaded for Singapore, and had to go South, while the *Alastor* must go North in any case. Why could not the gubernatorial party be content with the dear old *Alastor*?

"Exactly so!" retorted Gritz, "but your father would certainly arrange, if he were here, to send the Governor and his suite along the coast in the best steamer at his disposal. However, do as you please about the matter!"

In the course of further conversation, Johnnie elicited the fact that the Governor and Sir Walter Medhurst intended to return from the new Northern ports in the *Sultan*. It appeared that the *Sultan* was to carry certain Sikh troops to the north, although there was ample accommodation for them in the *Alastor*. Gritz said that Washington Clarke was on the point of concluding a contract with the Chartered Company with a subsidy guaran-

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teed to him, practically covering his working expenses, and thus making him a difficult competitor to subdue. This was most unpleasant news, and much altered the outlook. If Gritz had advised the Northwoods of the impending danger, it might have been averted by sending a finer vessel than either the *Fairy Queen* or the *Sultan* to run without a subsidy. But now it was too late, so Johnnie told Gritz that the *Alastor* was at the disposal of His Excellency to go wherever he wished, but that he could make no further alterations in his plans. Gritz, as he leaned back in his comfortable chair, slowly lowered an iced whisky and soda, a great luxury in Labuan, and then grinned at Johnnie until Johnnie wanted to hit him.

Just then those two remarkable professional men, Dr. Cockburn and Mr. Waister, the surveyor, strolled up the deck.

"How do, Northwood?" said the Doctor with an easy grace, which was really admirable in its way. "How's Papa? All right? That's good! Finest man on the coast bar none when he's here! Hear you have some *ice* on board! We don't often get ice, do we, Waister? I see good old Gritz hasn't been missing any chances, has he, Waister?"

Gritz said he would have just one "peg" with his friends and be off to Government House. In another five minutes he was away, leaving Johnnie to the society of his new acquaintances, who, naturally enough, stopped to dinner.

They drank bottled beer to dinner, and a good deal of brandy afterwards, before they discovered that whisky and soda was the only beverage after all. They finally declared that if Cassim would but sling a couple of hammocks for them, they would be quite as comfy on board as on shore.

The first thing next morning the worthy pair had one of the "boys" at work for them, and were soon compounding a mixture of gin, sugar, bitters, limes, crushed ice and

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water, with the aid of a "swizzle-stick." While Johnnie was taking his cup of tea, Mr. Waister explained that they did not indulge like this every morning, but there was no resisting a nicely-made gin-sling when iced; it was so seldom that a cold drink could be had in Labuan. Having put down several "slings" apiece, Dr. Cockburn and Mr. Waister at last started for the shore. As the Doctor got to the gangway he said: "By the way, Johnnie, my boy, Washington C. said a dashed good thing about you yesterday. He wanted to know why the dashed young admiral didn't hoist his dashed flag on his blooming battleship, the *Brunei*? Funny dog, ain't he? But the Governor and Sir Walter think no end of him. So long, Johnnie! Come along, Waister!"

The tiffin-party on board the *Brunei* was well done in every way. The *menu* was a delightful mixture of European and Asiatic dishes, so varied as to suit every taste. Nearly everybody preferred bottled beer to wine, but both were beautifully iced and much enjoyed. It was a large party, including the Governor and his officials, the manager of the coal-mines, the leading Chinese and native merchants, and the captains of the Northwood ships in port. Washington Clarke was the only prominent personage of Labuan who had not received an invitation.

The Governor briefly proposed, "Success to the *Brunei*." Towkay Guan Moh made a long and flowery speech in honour of Captain Northwood and "Baba Johnnie"; while Sheikh Mahomed Farid wished that they might live for a thousand years in the paths of the just, that they would be the fathers of innumerable children, and amass mountains of dollars.

Johnnie returned thanks for the various toasts and in his turn drank to the prosperity of the new State and to the health of the Governor, Mr. William Hood. Everything went off exceedingly well, but there was a lack of enthusiasm about the affair which was very noticeable. Johnnie overheard one of his guests saying to another:

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“ It's ever so much jollier when the Old Man is here ! ” to which his friend replied : “ Yes, I should think so, but why on earth isn't Old Northwood here to-day instead of his son ! ”

The guests, after having duly admired the new steamer, took their departure in twos and threes, with the exception of Dr. Cockburn and Mr. Waister, who, having started operations very early indeed that morning, had to be accommodated with a couple of berths in one of the cabins.

That evening Johnnie dined with His Excellency. He thought Government House the only beautiful thing in Labuan ; a spacious and picturesque mansion, embosomed in trees and surrounded by lawns and gardens.

The party also consisted of the Governor, Sir Walter Medhurst, Gritz, and a couple of other officials. After a quiet and pleasant dinner, Johnnie found a comfortable seat between the Governor and Sir Walter on the spacious and cool front verandah. In due course the conversation turned on the future of Borneo and its present development. Johnnie ventured to say that Mr. Clarke was being very much favoured at the expense of his father, the pioneer of the trade. Why, for instance, were the Chartered Company's Sikhs being sent by the *Sultan*, when there was plenty of room for them on the *Alastor* ?

Sir Walter replied : “ Perhaps, Mr. Northwood, it has not occurred to you that the Chartered Company may wish to encourage others besides your father. The new country wants new men, and Mr. Clarke appears to be gifted with both ability and energy. Is he not to be given some sort of a chance against your wealthy father ? ”

Johnnie found this a rather difficult thrust to parry, and mechanically turned to the Governor for support, with a remark to the effect that his father's ex-supercargo had not behaved very well in certain matters, and that a tried friend might be trusted rather than a newcomer.

After a slight pause, Mr. Hood replied : “ We are all aware of the eminent services rendered by your father



A NORTH BORNEO TOBACCO PLANTATION.

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in developing the trade of Borneo, which have found a rich reward in the handsome fortune which he now possesses. Your father made all his money out of Borneo, and now that we are opening up a new State crying aloud for every man and every dollar which can be attracted to its soil, you and your father, the self-elected protectors of British interests in Borneo, are actually at this moment investing a very large capital in the Dutch colonies! Certainly you are free to do what you like with your money, but don't ask us to grant you privileges amounting to a monopoly of the sea-borne trade, while you are actively engaging in the development of certain islands under a foreign flag. Your father shall certainly have fair treatment, but that is all!"

Johnnie felt that he had lost his battle. He now realized the force of the hostile movement which had been led against the Northwood interests by Washington Clarke. He knew that the man who had been so glad to take service with them was now going round Labuan with the energy of an Irish patriot, talking incessantly of the Northwoods as monopolists, sweaters, and usurers. What did the Northwood cub want in Labuan harbour with a whole fleet, except to intimidate people from the Governor downwards and force every one on the coast to accept the Northwood monopoly? Washington Clarke assured everybody, white, yellow, and brown, that as long as he lived, and as long as his house-flag flew at the *Sultan's* mast-head, he would protect them from the oppression of the Northwoods. This sort of thing went down amazingly well, and had its distinct echo even on the cool verandah of Government House.

Johnnie, finding his discomfiture complete, now bethought himself of beating his retreat in the best order possible. After a short conversation on indifferent subjects, Johnnie pleaded fatigue, and begged to be allowed to go on board his ship. After arranging with Mr. Hood that the *Alastor* should leave Labuan at four p.m. the next day, Johnnie

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made his adieux, got into a trap which was waiting for him, and drove to the wharf. During the drive he had made up his mind. Directly he got on board the *Alastor* he ordered Captain Bird to be ready for sea by four p.m. next day, and at the same time sent orders to Captain Whistler of the *Fairy Queen* to get alongside the coal-wharf at daylight, where he would fill his holds and bunkers, take in his fresh water and provisions, etc., and be ready to leave at short notice for the Moluccas.

The next afternoon the Governor, Sir Walter, Mr. Gritz, a couple of other officials, together with their native servants, half a dozen Sikhs, the same number of ponies, and a pile of stores and baggage, were all on board of the *Alastor*, so that Captain Bird was able to sail punctually at four p.m. The *Alastor* steamed within a cable's length of the *Sultan* as she was loading a full cargo, chiefly of Government stores, which, with a deck-load of troops, would pay very handsomely indeed. The *Fairy Queen* was filling up fast at the coal-wharf, and was ordered to sail that night for Ternate direct. The *Ceylon* had already sailed for Amboina. The *Brunei* was to leave for Singapore the next day.

The *Alastor* steamed along the Borneo coast in glorious weather. It was very pleasant to dine on deck in the cool of the evening, and to stroll or lounge about with a cigar and enjoy the fresh sea-breezes. No trouble or expense had been spared to make the ship as comfortable as possible for this especial voyage. Everyone simply wallowed in the lap of luxury for the time being. In view of the number, and especially of the quality, of the passengers on board, the chief engineer and the other officers were relegated to a separate mess of their own. This, it appears, gave old McCracken dire offence, but it didn't prevent him from calling himself the Mess President, and securing a large share for himself and brother officers of the wines and delicacies which were being supplied with such profusion at the Captain's table. The Chinese and native "boys" who waited at table were also having an exceptionally

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good time of it. The *Alastor*, from the engine-room aft, was a most jolly and festive ship.

Kudat was reached after a short passage, and no sooner had the *Alastor* dropped her anchor, than a white-faced, fever-stricken Resident hurried on board to report to His Excellency the Governor.

Kudat at that day was a wild, desolate-looking sort of place. As the sun beat on the green waters of the bay, dark shadows beneath the surface betrayed the existence of huge reefs with sinister suggestions of shipwreck. On land the general prospect was most unprepossessing. The prevailing impression was one of immense, gloomy, impenetrable forests. In the foreground were the scanty results of civilization.

The Residency, the chief feature of the town, was a very large and exceedingly ugly square building, overlooking the sea. No attempt had been yet made to have anything in the shape of a garden round the place, it being the day when everything was limited to what was strictly necessary. The Residency, therefore, stood in a sort of sultry, treeless, barren waste. A rough road led to a row of plank and attap buildings—the Sikh barracks. A little further was a hideous corrugated-iron structure, which appeared to be growing really red-hot—this was Kudat Jail.

On the sea-front were a couple of buildings in actual brick-and-mortar of the unlovely shophouse type, so common in Singapore and elsewhere. These were the shops and residences of a couple of enterprising Chinamen, who appeared to represent the whole trade of the place. It is astonishing how a Chinaman takes to bricks-and-mortar whenever he gets a chance.

Away amongst some rocks, an excessively dilapidated and dirty native fishing-village was built over the water. In the background were openings in the dense forest where clearings had been attempted. The burning-off of the undergrowth left a horrid track behind it of blackened stumps, of charred limbs and ashes. In various places

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large banks of newly thrown-up earth, raw and unsightly, marked the commencement of some work or other. Right abreast of the *Alastor* a row of roughly squared piles emerged from the water, indicating that this was where the wharf would be situated. Gangs of convicts, clanking in their chains, as they hauled some heavy log of wood or other burden, by no means added to the gaiety of the scene.

Johnnie was aroused from the reveries into which the first sight of Kudat had plunged him, by the robust voice of Mr. McCracken: "I'm thinkin', Mr. Northwood, that yon Kudat is like some whisky I had in Singapore the other day. It's too new!"

"It must have been pretty awful stuff if it was quite as raw as this place," retorted Johnnie.

During the day the Governor invited Mr. Northwood and Captain Bird to dine at the Residency. The dinner was not a great success. The soup was plainly of the tinned variety, the fish was all right, but the fowls were leathery, and the curries were obviously cooked by a Chinaman. Biscuits took the place of bread. Whisky of a very inferior quality, and tepid water, partly cleared of its impurities by a dripstone, formed the only drink which the unfortunate Resident could offer his guests. Even this entertainment, poor as it was, probably meant an expense which the Resident could ill afford. The Chartered Company got men to work very hard and to take great risks for them.

Soon after sundown the intense heat of the day changed to a sort of clammy chilliness, and Johnnie pitied the poor Resident shivering in his white drill suit. And yet the Residency of Kudat was a post for which a dozen good men had competed fiercely. Sir Walter found Johnnie on the big verandah gazing at the uninviting prospect before them, and said: "You don't think much of Kudat, I fear! I should be surprised if you carried away any favourable impression of the place, but, believe me, the

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potential wealth of Kudat is beyond the dreams of avarice. These forests are full of the finest and most valuable timbers in existence ; they will yield enormous quantities of rattans, rubber, beeswax, and other jungle produce. Beyond the forest are vast rolling plains of the most fertile land in the Far East, most admirably suited for tobacco. The time is not distant when we shall have large tobacco-plantations opening up in this district. I regret that Dutchmen and Germans should be the pioneers of tobacco-planting in Borneo. They will naturally get the finest estates into their hands, leaving the rest to such British planters as may have the pluck to follow in the footsteps of the more enterprising foreigner. I also hope to settle Chinese agriculturists here. We have some Chinese already, the traders who stay here for so many years, amass a large sum of money, and in the end take the whole of it with them to China. I intend to settle Chinese families on the soil, a farming race who will come here, man, woman, and child, and cultivate this fertile country—people who will grow their own crops and cattle, convert the wastes of Kudat into vast gardens and make it a wealth-producing region. The Chinese whom I shall select for this purpose will come from the strong, prolific race who populate vast areas of China, where there is scarce room for them. They are the people who will live on the land, increase and multiply, and do more than any others to populate and strengthen Borneo. Without the Chinese we shall never do much in Borneo.”

Sir Walter was evidently an enthusiast in his great work, but his glowing picture of the near future was in such vivid contrast to the actual and visible state of things, that it required a very robust faith to accept implicitly the forecast so confidently outlined.

“ Sir Walter is right,” Mr. Hood said. “ There is a great future for Kudat, and it must necessarily become a place of importance. When it has been drained and certain swamps filled up, it will be healthy enough. The harbour

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is not a bad one, and when the reefs are properly surveyed and buoyed, they need not be considered as dangerous. But, in my opinion, Kudat can never offer sufficient advantages as a port to become the permanent capital of British North Borneo. Wait until you see Sandakan Bay, in which all the navies of the world can ride, and tell me what you think of it as compared with Kudat. Some day, I believe, our capital will be at Elopura in Sandakan Bay. In the meantime Kudat will serve very conveniently as our head-quarters."

After inviting the whole white population of Kudat to tiffin next day on board the *Alastor*, Northwood and Captain Bird started for their ship. They found Mr. Gritz already comfortably seated in the stern of their boat. He was going to sleep on board the *Alastor*, it appeared.

"Much better than sleeping in the hole they have given me in the Residency; besides, a bit of supper and a good breakfast are worth having, when you can get anything of the kind at Kudat. Glad you asked me to tiffin, Northwood!"

Mr. Gritz's coolness was really refreshing, but he was always good fun, and as Captain Bird was a particularly reserved and taciturn young man, Mr. Gritz was rather an acquisition in his way.

During an excellent cold supper Gritz pitied the "poor devils in the Residency," and heartily congratulated himself on his superior wisdom in finding such good quarters for himself. Next morning, after a remarkably fine breakfast, he steered one of the ship's boats to the Residency, "feeling good," as he expressed it.

The tiffin-party was a great success. The Resident and his assistants having landed, the *Alastor* continued her journey late in the afternoon. After dinner Johnnie Northwood explained his view to the Governor and Sir Walter that the wealth of Borneo was still in the ground, while in the Spice Islands it lay on the surface, and, in a manner of speech, the money had merely to



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A TYPICAL SCENE IN BORNEO.

[The British North Borneo Co.

[Facing p. 192

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be taken away from places like Amboina, Banda and Ternate. Centuries of civilization and cultivation had made these islands very different from a virgin and exceedingly difficult country, such as Borneo, while the laziness and apathy of the modern Dutch colonists left the door wide open for British competition. A further difficulty which the Northwoods experienced in their Borneo trade was the trouble of getting men who would serve them faithfully, however well they were paid. In a few months they had, for various reasons, lost Captain Hall, Mr. Gritz, and Mr. Washington Clarke. Captain Hall had amassed quite a little fortune, and, in any event, Mr. Clarke must have done very well for himself in their service, since he had been able to save or make enough money to buy a smart steamer to run against his old master. This sort of thing was discouraging enough. Finally, Johnnie urged that if Shelby's promises were realized in full, as had already been the case in part, his father would have ample funds for investment in Borneo a little later.

Mr. Hood replied that he was pleased that this little explanation had been made, and asked a number of questions about the Moluccas trade. Sir Walter, however, preserved an unbroken silence throughout the whole conversation.

Sir Walter Medhurst was a very handsome man, whose commanding presence seemed but natural to the possession of a singularly gifted mind. It was no small grief to Johnnie to think that he could not in any manner gain the friendship of Sir Walter, who seemed in some silent way to disapprove of his words and actions in every detail. Mr. Hood, on the other hand, had gradually got to like Johnnie, and was now very kind to the lad.

The next morning the *Alastor* was steaming very slowly up a winding, muddy river. The continually repeated cries of the Malay sailors in the chains announced shoaling water. Captain Bird was on the bridge, but it was Cassim who navigated the *Alastor*. Presently the engines were

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"rung off," and the rattle of a chain cable announced that the ship had come to anchor.

Johnnie looked with amazement at the scene; a dirty, swirling stream, bordered on each side with huge, filthy, sweltering mud-banks and miles of hideous mangrove swamps. That was all! And, although it was still early morning, the heat was becoming oppressive. What in the world was the Governor doing with the *Alastor* in such an abominable and utterly desolate river?

Just then Captain Bird appeared on the quarter-deck, followed by Cassim, and said to the Governor: "Your Excellency, I can take the *Alastor* no further up the river. We have very little water under our keel as it is, and shall be on the mud most likely in another hour or two. The Fort should not be much more than a mile from our present anchorage, according to what Cassim states, and I understand he knows the river."

"Very well, Captain Bird! Be good enough to have a couple of guns fired as a signal to the Fort."

Immediately Cassim and his sailors smartly cast off the lashings of a couple of long brass guns which peered over the *Alastor's* stern, and promptly loaded and fired them at an interval of a minute between each gun. The brass guns made a tremendous row in those desolate wastes, but barely had the echoes of the second discharge died away, when the dull boom of a gun in the distance conveyed the answering signal from the Fort.

Presently a long canoe, flying the Chartered Company's flag, came dashing round the uppermost bend of the river as fast as a dozen paddles could send it. The boat was soon alongside the *Alastor*, and in another minute Mr. Everard, the Resident of Abai, was on her quarter-deck. Johnnie had met Everard at Woodleigh, when he was on his way to Borneo, and thought him a very jolly fellow; he was surprised, therefore, to find that the Resident now seemed to avoid him, and that while he was making all sorts of arrangements for the landing of the Governor's party, he

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carefully refrained from inviting Johnnie to the Residency. As the Governor was preparing to make his adieux, Johnnie said: "Breakfast will be on the table in a few minutes, your Excellency, and as it's a long pull up the river, I hope that we shall have the pleasure of your society for just a little longer. Mr. Everard will, of course, join us."

Mr. Everard's brow seemed to clear visibly, while Mr. Gritz said, with unusual emphasis: "That's what I call a jolly good idea! No use going up a river like this on an empty stomach. It's beastly dangerous!"

Just then the breakfast bell rang, and everyone sat down to an excellent meal. It was comical to witness the mixture of surprise and delight with which Everard found himself in front of an iced *pâté de foie gras*. A long glass of cool sparkling ale seemed to soak itself into his parched system like drops of rain on a burning desert. He declined to have any more bottled Bass purely out of good manners, but Johnnie earned his undying gratitude by having his glass filled up on the sly.

Before leaving the ship, Mr. Hood presented Johnnie with a leather case containing a valuable and very beautiful Rigby express rifle, together with a large supply of cartridges, a gift which so delighted him that he could scarce find words in which to express his thanks.

The distinguished passengers then took their leave. Johnnie, still puzzled and offended because he had no invitation from Everard, declined to visit Abai.

"Well, there's not much to see at Abai in two or three hours," said the Governor; "but there are square miles of magnificent country in the vicinity of the Fort worth a visit if you could give it two or three days."

Sir Walter, unrelenting to the last, thanked Johnnie for his hospitality, but could not refrain from adding: "Somehow I enjoy the voyage much better when your father is on board!"

"Come, Sir Walter!" intervened the Governor. "Are you not a little hard on our young friend?"

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“Not at all!” quoth Johnnie. “I love a compliment paid to my father!”

Finally, the whole party got away and proceeded up the river. Meanwhile, other boats had come from the Fort to take the Sikhs, the servants, ponies, baggage and stores. When this was done and the bustle was over, the *Alastor* seemed to be strangely silent and deserted. Johnnie took his tiffin in the somewhat dull and uncongenial company of Captain Bird, Mr. McCracken, and the chief officer. The heat grew to be something terrific; the mud-banks and the mangrove swamps swam in a quivering haze which distressed the eyes, while the muddy river seemed to be at something like boiling-point.

Johnnie drew his chair into the shadiest corner he could find and sank into it with a feeling of complete exhaustion. Just then his favourite dog Lion, a huge black mastiff, believed by the natives to be his owner's familiar demon, stepped gingerly over the heated decks, laid his huge head on his master's knee, and gave him a reproachful look out of his yellow-brown eyes which said, as clearly as possible: “I say, master, why have you brought me to this terrible place?” Johnnie was busy soothing his gigantic pet, as he knew how, when the chief officer reported that the Resident's boat was coming alongside.

Mr. Everard was soon on deck, and at once plunged into his subject: “I am sure, Mr. Northwood, that you must think me an awful beast, after all your kindness to me, so I managed to get away from the Fort under the pretence of seeing about the landing of the Sikhs and stores and things to tell you how matters really stand with me. I knew nothing about the *Alastor* coming here, and it wouldn't have mattered much if I did. I haven't a thing at the Fort, and there is nowhere where I can get anything. I ate my last chicken ten days ago. I had a goat tied up as a sort of reserve, but the d——d brute seemed to know that something was coming, because I'm blessed if he didn't chew through his rope this very morning and

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bolt into the jungle! I couldn't ask you and Captain Bird, because I'd nothing to give you. The natives have stolen most of my cutlery and crockery, and I have nothing left but a few bent knives and forks, and some chipped and cracked plates. You should have seen the tiffin I gave the Governor's lot to-day! The few rusty tins of stuff I had were opened, and I gave them some rice and a *dhol* curry made by my Sikhs. You know the horrid mess of split peas swimming in grease? As for drinks, I had the butt-end of a bottle of whisky, which I had loaded up with quinine and kept by me for an emergency—the next attack of fever. I gave them that in small doses diluted with lukewarm water. Told them the quinine was just the thing for Abai! They didn't say much, but the Governor hinted that the sooner the stores were landed the better."

Johnnie looked sympathetically at the luckless Resident as he said: "Poor old Everard! I must really see what can be done for you. Now just have a nice cool whisky and soda with me while I send for Captain Bird."

An inspection of the mate's tally of the cargo for Abai did not help matters much. The list comprised surveying instruments, and many other useful things; but beyond one case of tinned provisions and another of whisky, there seemed to be nothing in the whole consignment which would in the least degree help Everard in his dilemma. The Resident, in the meantime, was gazing at an iced whisky and soda in a sort of ecstasy. It was such a rare and beautiful apparition to the poor fellow, that he hardly dared to drink it until Johnnie set him the example.

It had been decided that the *Alastor* was to sail for Ternate that evening, but Johnnie now altered his plans. He gave Everard a very polite note to the Governor, in which it was stated that as the tide did not serve until next morning, he sincerely hoped that His Excellency the Governor, Sir Walter Medhurst, and all his friends at

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Abai would do him the honour to be present at a farewell dinner on board the *Alastor* that evening.

"Now, mind you put everything down to the state of the tide," said Johnnie to Everard. "While you are away, I'll get some fowls and ducks and things ready for you. Send a boat for them as soon as you can. And I'll put some wine and beer and soda-water, and anything else I can think of, into the boat, as well as the rest of my ice. Now, Everard, the sooner you are off to the Fort the better!"

The joyful Everard did as he was told, while Johnnie set to work to order a champagne dinner, and to enjoy the congenial task of provisioning the Fort at his own expense.

Captain Bird and Mr. McCracken were hugely disgusted on learning that the *Alastor's* departure was to be deferred for a mere dinner-party. The chief engineer's wrath was still further inflamed when he saw cases of delicate wines and choice provisions, crates of poultry, and quantities of ice carefully packed in sawdust being sent away to the Fort. McCracken having no manner of fear of Johnnie, swore loudly in his hearing that this kind of thing was just d——d foolery. Captain Northwood was given to a sort of reckless ram-stam style of chucking his money away, but his son was "just outrageous!" Here was the Governor and his gang swilling themselves with champagne and living like prizefighters on board the *Alastor*, while they sent a whole cargo and a regiment of Sikhs by the *Sultan*! A fine business truly! And now every bottle and biscuit, and every cock and hen on board their ship was being sent off to the Fort—forbye burning coals for nothing! Mebbe the great Johnnie Northwood might soon be whistling for the good goods he was hustling over the ship's side at such a gate!

All this was gross impertinence, but Johnnie knew better than to take any notice of honest John McCracken when he was on his hind legs. The sour silence of Captain Bird annoyed him more than the open insolence of the

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chief engineer. When the Resident's boat was once more seen round the bend of the river, the Captain announced that he felt too unwell to take the head of the table that evening, and retired to sulk in his own cabin. Northwood was only too delighted to get rid of him, and receiving his guests with the utmost cordiality, took the head of the table himself.

It proved to be a really delightful dinner. The guests fully appreciated their host's kindly intentions, and entered into the spirit of the thing most heartily. The dinner itself proved to be excellent at all points. Fortunately, also, it happened to be a moonlit night of exceptional brilliance, which made even the dismal anchorage of the *Alastor* seem almost beautiful. Myriads of fireflies flashed in the mangrove-swamps, illuminating the scene in a most extraordinary way. In this weird, unholy kind of river, a band of venturesome Englishmen dined and drained their glasses in all good fellowship on the quarter-deck of the *Alastor*. It was long past midnight before the company broke up, and the Governor and his friends left the ship for the Fort. Sir Walter said a few kind words to Johnnie as he left the ship, which were destined to be the last to be exchanged between them, for they never met again.

At daylight the next morning the *Alastor* dropped down the river, and once in blue water, Captain Bird set his course for the distant island of Ternate.

It was most exhilarating to escape from that pestilential, stifling river. Profiting by a favouring breeze, Bird set every sail the *Alastor* could carry. This exhibited the old vessel at her best. Heeling gracefully over under the pressure of her big spread of canvas, with her engines running easily, she ran gaily on her way to the Spice Islands at her top speed.

Johnnie settled down to a healthy quiet life on board his ship, which he enjoyed immensely. But after a couple of days troubles of a minor order began to ruffle his

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serenity. Two days after leaving Abai, when Johnnie wanted some claret for tiffin, he was told there was none left, nor was there any white wine, nor anything else except two or three bottles of beer. Even the whisky was all gone! This was very disconcerting, because the *Alastor* had been stocked with the greatest liberality for the entire cruise to Borneo and the Moluccas and back to Singapore. Captain Bird laughed, while McCracken was boisterously gleeful over the fact that the *Alastor* was at last to be a "teetottle ship."

Now that the mischief was done, everybody was eager enough to tell Northwood what had been going on without his knowledge. It appears that while Johnnie was ashore at Kudat, Sir Walter Medhurst's "boy" had given a banquet to all the other servants on board the ship, at which champagne flowed freely, while delicacies such as *pâtés* and ox-tongues were gobbled up freely. Sir Walter's "boy" was even so good as to propose a toast in Chinese, which was received with enthusiasm, and responded to in other speeches amidst bumpers of champagne. "It was a great sight!" said McCracken. Sir Walter's "boy" slept off the effects of the champagne in his master's bed. He was so drunk, as McCracken explained, that he got into bed wrong end first and slept with his feet on Sir Walter's pillows. The captain, officers and engineers were all highly delighted at the recital of the robberies at which they had connived. Bird said that it was no business of his to look after Sir Walter Medhurst's servant, while McCracken explained that as he and the other officers had been removed to a *separate mess*, they had a delicacy about interfering with anything which took place on the quarter-deck from which they had been excluded! *That* was what had raised the devil in the hearts of the lot of them! They weren't good enough to sit down with the Governor and Sir Walter, hey? The physical fact that there was not room for them all at the captain's table did not weigh with them in the slightest; they had felt them-

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selves insulted, and would have their petty revenge. The captain, having been especially coached for his examination and promoted to his first command by Captain Northwood, immediately sided with the malcontents—that being in the natural order of things, and what might be reasonably expected.

An examination of the stores showed that McCracken and his friends had allowed the joke to be carried too far altogether, and that it was about to recoil on their own heads. The idea was to run Johnnie short of such luxuries as champagne and claret, but an examination showed a wholesale shortage of provisions which no amount of waste or extravagance could explain. All the hams, canned meats and vegetables had gone. Not a tin of biscuit or a bag of flour was left! Evidently there had been robbery on a very large scale.

The matter was now gone into seriously, nor did it take long to discover that large quantities of goods had been sold to the two Chinese shopkeepers at Kudat, while the Sikhs who had landed at Abai had taken what little was left, besides managing to lift a couple of sheep and some poultry in the general confusion. The Sikhs are born plunderers. Further, an examination of the tanks showed that the Sikhs and other natives had been allowed to use far too much water.

Johnnie, who had inherited his father's weakness for helping lame dogs over stiles, might be responsible for giving away some of the wines, which, after all, came from the bins at Woodleigh, and various table-delicacies; but he had nothing to do with the disappearance of such necessities as flour and water. Everybody felt that their youthful and sulky captain had been remiss in his duties, but all the officers on board knew perfectly well that they had tacitly encouraged the ship's servants to make free with the cabin-stores, and thus set them to think of perpetrating further robberies. As Captain Bird would not act in the matter, Mr. McCracken and the first and second

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mates formed themselves into a small executive committee. The first thing they did was to severely flog the cabin-steward, and handcuff him to the rigging. Three of his accomplices and the tindal in charge of the water were treated the same way. The wages of all these men were declared confiscated, and at sundown the chief culprit, the cabin-steward, was kicked forward and told to serve in the sailors' galley for the rest of the voyage. The whole ship's company was put on short rations, both of food and water.

The captain did not attempt to hide his disapproval of what was taking place on board his ship, but Johnnie could not support him in his contention that the punishment of these men was brutal. What else was to be done? Evidently something had to be done with a lot of well-paid and well-fed ruffians, who deliberately sold the ship's stores for their own profit.

As each day passed the *menu* got scantier, and the meals finally resolved themselves into a monotonous fare of rice and potatoes, of which there was fortunately a supply still available. The water, however, had to be very carefully watched, and it had also got thick and discoloured. Johnnie did not in the least mind living on rice and potatoes, and a short allowance of bad water, but it cut him to the heart to have to starve Lion, and let him go thirsty. Every drop of his allowance of water which could be spared went to the poor dog.

During the long run from Abai to Ternate, Northwood had ample opportunities of studying that very singular young man, Captain Bird. A handsome, well-set-up Australian, twenty-seven years of age, Bird easily took the fancy of those who met him. An excellent seaman, he had been as good a chief officer as Captain Northwood had ever employed. Owing chiefly to his Australian education in some sort of very odd surroundings, Bird had got filled up with a mixture of religion and socialism which threw his mind completely out of balance. He made

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himself unhappy because a lad like Northwood was the master of a fleet of ships while old men had to struggle for their bread. The unfortunate man went so far as to reproach himself for being a captain at twenty-seven, while grey-headed mariners were thankful to serve as mates. He bitterly repented having taken part in champagne dinners on board the *Alastor*, which he was convinced were wicked and sinful orgies. Just before he left Singapore, he got word that his old father, who apparently was a person upright and austere even unto unpleasantness, had suddenly taken it into his head to marry a girl of eighteen. This news plunged him into the blackest despair. To Captain Bird his father's dishonour was a matter of no uncertainty. Northwood tried in vain to persuade him that it was quite possible for his youthful mother-in-law to remain an honest woman; but Bird would not be comforted. The family disgrace became an obsession, which poisoned every minute of his life. The wretched man also entertained the belief that the end of the world was now due, and he was prepared to welcome the general catastrophe with a bitter joy. The one ray of light which illuminated this dismal soul consisted in the oft-cherished vision of the dire destruction which would ere long overtake youthful shipowners who drank champagne, and young girls who married old men in order to deceive them.

In spite of all drawbacks, Johnnie enjoyed his cruise immensely. The pure sea air acted as a constant tonic; perchance the scanty food, which he ate with great relish, to the disgust of a man with a queasy stomach like Bird or a gross feeder like McCracken, was good for the young fellow. Above all, the change from his long spell of office work made his present life a jolly one in spite of all its drawbacks.

He loved to race up and down the decks of the *Alastor* in a pair of bathing drawers at the flush of dawn, and get the sailors washing the decks to turn the hose on him.

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He spent some of his time very usefully catching fish, with a stout line ending in a big brass hook, baited with a bit of rag. He often got big fish weighing their thirty pounds or so, which made a delightful addition to the rice and potatoes which were served three times a day at the captain's table. Another amusement was to throw empty bottles over the steamer's stern and smash them with his unerring Rigby rifle. At one time he would be scampering up the rigging, and at another lying right out on the bowsprit, watching the forefoot of the *Alastor* shearing through the brilliant sea.

The contempt with which these antics filled Bird and McCracken need not be described, but the lad had to keep himself amused. He had read or given away all his books—Captain Bird's library consisted of half a dozen well-thumbed works, on theology and socialism, which Johnnie could *not* tackle. McCracken, in his spare moments, used to read up the volumes of a medical dictionary upon which he set great store, alleging that this useful publication had enabled him to save the lives of sundry and divers persons.

But Johnnie, feeling as he looked at it that he began to develop every horrible disease under A and B, refused to have anything further to do with it.

The *Alastor* was eight days out from Abai when Captain Bird, in response to repeated inquiries, said that all being well he expected to make Ternate at daylight next day. The glad news flew all over the ship that their long run of over sixteen hundred miles was nearly over, and that before long everybody on board might revel in fresh provisions and fresh water.

The *Alastor* had sighted nothing but a few native craft during her cruise through these deserted seas, but on the last evening of their voyage a cloud of smoke was visible right ahead of them. As Captain Bird correctly surmised, they had overtaken the *Fairy Queen* just as she was getting near Ternate. The two ships exchanged signals, and by Northwood's orders the *Alastor's* speed was reduced to that

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of the *Fairy Queen*, so that both vessels should steam into Ternate harbour together.

Next morning Northwood was on deck before sunrise, anxiously waiting for the light of day. As soon as it was possible to do so, he signalled to the *Fairy Queen* to steam into Ternate ahead of the *Alastor*.

It broke a superb morning. The cool land-breezes brought with them delicious odours, which rejoiced every heart on board, and set Lion scampering about the decks perfectly mad with joy. Presently the *Alastor* steamed in between the mighty volcanoes of Ternate and Tidore. Never had any one on board beheld a scene of such perfect loveliness. The two great mountains, mirrored in the sea, are five miles apart from one another, although the distance in a very transparent air looked much less. A number of smaller islands graced the surface of what appeared to be a vast lake. Soft white sands, fairy-like palm-groves, and dense masses of virgin forest growing to the very summit of the great volcanoes, were vividly reflected in a delicious crystal medium so lovely and so transparent that it could scarcely be sea-water. Such a vision of colour was peculiarly striking to those who had come direct from the savage squalor of Kudat and Abai. Johnnie stood spellbound. He could hardly believe himself still on earth, until he heard McCracken say: "My God! but it's lovely!"

As the *Alastor* neared the shore, the delightful white residences of the Dutch inhabitants, surrounded by beautiful gardens, and the clean and pretty native villages, imparted a sense of peace and prosperity such as befitted the wondrous beauty of the scene. Descending to more prosaic details, Johnnie noticed a Dutch gunboat occupying the only wharf in the place, while about a mile off the shore Captain Hardy's old ship, the *Victory*, was at anchor. There were plenty of native craft to be seen, but no other European vessels.

Northwood's ships having come to an anchor, it was not

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long before a large boat flying the Dutch flag put off from the shore and boarded the *Alastor*.

With the Dutch officials came a short, stout, dapper gentleman, whose clear, coffee-coloured complexion announced the generous admixture of native blood which flowed in his veins. This very polite person announced himself as Cornelius van Papendrecht, a name which Northwood immediately recognized as that of the Ternate agent selected by Shelby. Van Papendrecht placed himself entirely at Northwood's disposal, assuring him that there could be no more welcome sight in Ternate than the Northwood house-flag, a white St. Andrew's Cross displayed on a blue and red field, already made familiar in the Moluccas by the *Ceylon* and *Amboina*.

Northwood was rather taken by the appearance of his Ternate agent and made friends with him at once.

Meanwhile, a whole fleet of native boats had crowded round the *Alastor*. Eager natives offered fresh coconuts, bananas, fruit and vegetables of all kinds to the famished crew of the *Alastor*, and did a roaring trade. Other natives came off with boatloads of monkeys, parakeets, and all manner of strange beasts and birds, which also found a ready market. It was a great day for Ternate.

Johnnie, having noticed a jar of water in one of the canoes, immediately insisted on buying it, and pouring the contents into a tub, had the satisfaction of seeing Lion dipping his great muzzle into the clear, sweet liquid and slaking his thirst. After he had enjoyed his swill to the utmost, Lion walked up to his master and offered him his right paw, which was heartily shaken in all friendship.

As the Dutch boat was going off to the *Fairy Queen*, Northwood had one of his own boats lowered and got into it with Van Papendrecht. Lion produced an unrehearsed effect by bounding into the boat and nearly upsetting it, but when he finished up by sitting between

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his master's legs the sailors recovered from their momentary confusion, and settling down to their work were soon alongside a bamboo jetty in front of Van Papendrecht's residence. A walk through a delightful garden brought them to the Dutchman's villa, a spacious, lofty and very handsome building all on one floor, adorned with marble pillars and floors, altogether a luxurious and comfortable place with a grateful sense of coolness pervading it. Evidently Mr. van Papendrecht was a man of some wealth.

They talked over business quietly for some time, discussing Captain Hardy, the Batjan Company, Shelby, the New Guinea trade, and so on, until a native servant respectfully announced that tiffin, or, rather, the *rijstafel*, was ready.

Once in the dining-room a preliminary *pahit*, or gin and bitters, was insisted upon by the hospitable Cornelius, and the pair of them sat down to a meal consisting of so many delicacies that it really appeared as if there was no end to them. The cuisine was based on native ideas from start to finish, with few exceptions. The choicest and finest fish and poultry were served with aromatic sauces simply beyond praise. Then came an interminable series of curries and sambals of a remarkable pungency and flavour which bore witness to long and scientific preparation. It was not possible to resist the manifold temptations of these delightful dishes.

Johnnie, wearied enough of his diet of rice, potatoes and muddy water on board of the *Alastor*, stuffed himself disgracefully. Some of the curried prawns were so hot in the mouth that they brought tears to Johnnie's eyes, to the great delight of the case-hardened Cornelius. Good eating deserveth good drinking. Johnnie found Van Papendrecht's hock and apollinaris beyond reproach. In the later stages of the meal, he was induced to substitute a light German beer for the wine, and thought it an excellent idea. Van Papendrecht had no ice, but

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there was a deep well in his grounds, in which he cooled his drinks to a nicety.

During this singular feast, Cornelius, who devoured at least three times the quantity which his famished guest could eat, chatted at intervals as best he could. It appeared that his father, Papendrecht I., had made a lot of money in Ternate. But, urged Cornelius, those were the old days of sailing ships. With steamers it would be possible to make more money in a day than could be earned by the old "windjammers" in a month. Steam tonnage was the key to wealth in the Moluccas and New Guinea.

To this disjointed chat, pregnant with golden promise, our hero lent something of a distracted ear. He could not help noticing a bevy of young and very good-looking native women hovering about the verandahs, who had evidently busied themselves in producing a truly delicious repast. A perfect swarm of bonnie coloured children, all of whom somehow reminded Johnnie of Cornelius van Papendrecht, played in careless glee all over the villa. The worthy Cornelius ignored the very existence of the various women and children most successfully. To him they were no more than the birds in the trees!

This gorgeous repast being at last ended by a cup of really exquisite coffee, Cornelius lit a fragrant cigar, and to Johnnie's astonishment told him it was now time to go to bed, until, say, five p.m., when they would go for a drive and call on the Resident. Cornelius further suggested that if Johnnie did not care to sleep alone, he would send down to the *kampung* and get a pretty partner for him. Evidently Cornelius van Papendrecht was a person of patriarchal habits. This was the "height of hospitality" indeed, and Cornelius was nonplussed by the British prudery which rejected it. Finally, Cornelius saw his guest into a great cool bedroom, where Johnnie, totally unaccustomed to anything of the kind, undressed himself, and laid himself to rest with nothing more compromising

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than the long, stiff bolster known throughout the Far East as a "Dutch wife."

Just then, Lion, who had also been gorging himself, shuffled in, and after having shoved his great black head between the mosquito-curtains and had a sniff of his master, took up his quarters under the bed with a gentle growl of contentment.

Johnnie stretched his limbs in the luxurious bed and tried to think about the position. What an odd way of doing business? When did people like Van Papendrecht ever do any work? If they never worked, how were they going to make their millions? In the meantime, a drowsy sensuous air, laden with the perfumes of sweet flowers, pervaded the great, silent room. Feeling completely enervated, Johnnie at last rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

It was a very delightful slumber, which seemed to last about five minutes, when he was awakened by Lion growling at a native servant who was too frightened to enter the room. Once he was fairly roused, it didn't take long to make Master Johnnie realize that something had gone wrong with him. To judge by his immediate sensations, some one had been kind enough to feed him with bricks and then hit him on the head with a mallet. He felt so heavy and stupid that he did not know what to do with himself. The *siesta* is a deadly indulgence to those who have not acquired the habit by daily practice. A nice cool bath braced him up wonderfully, and he felt as if a cup of tea would make him all right again. When he got on the verandah, however, he found Van Papendrecht sitting at a round, marble table on which was a brass tray with about two dozen liqueur glasses of *pahit* on it. "Have a *pahit*, Mr. Northwood; it will do you good. What did you say? *Tea*? If you are sick I will call the doctor! No! we have no tea in the house, but I will get some."

Northwood, who did not feel like drinking gin and

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bitters, finally compromised with Cornelius for a tumbler of hock and apollinaris. Presently a Dutch neighbour dropped in, bowed ceremoniously, said something in his native tongue to Cornelius, absorbed at least half a dozen *pahits*, and solemnly took his departure. Another gentleman dropped in, every whit as polite in his way, and who, with some assistance from Van Papendrecht, absolutely polished off the rest of the *pahits* on the tray.

Just then, a pair of very pretty ponies rattled up with a nice roomy phaeton, whereupon the visitor took his departure. Cornelius and his guest then got into the carriage, and with Lion galloping behind them, drove off to see the Resident, who lived at a distance of some three miles away, in a charming place surrounded by a beautiful park.

The Resident was a fine, dignified ex-army officer, and a very kindly man withal, who assured his English visitor that he should have every assistance and encouragement in his new venture. Naturally the inevitable *pahits* were trotted out, and Johnnie had the greatest difficulty in excusing himself from taking more than one glass, on the score of some relentless malady which made the absorption of gin and bitters all but fatal. The Resident contemplated his visitor with an eager but melancholy interest. Privately he thought that this young Englishman ought to be stuffed and sent to a museum.

Even that one glass of *pahit* had made Johnnie feel dizzy for the moment, and when they rose to take their departure, he suggested that they should walk home. "Walk!" gasped the astounded Cornelius. "What for? We have a very good carriage, have we not?" They drove off in silence, Johnnie trying to think out how these colonial Dutchmen manage to avert the sudden death which they were so continually provoking, while Van Papendrecht wondered whether all Englishmen wanted to drink tea and walk, when there was no apparent necessity for doing either of these things.

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Presently Johnnie roused himself and inquired at what time it was usual in Ternate to transact business.

"Business!" said Van Papendrecht briskly. "Ah! you like to do some business! Well, you shall have as much business as you want between this evening and sunrise to-morrow. To-night we dine with my brother-in-law, Van Swoll, who wants to buy your *Fairy Queen*. In your place I would not sell your steamer, but Shelby says you don't want to run her under the Dutch flag, and prefer to make a friendly arrangement with Van Swoll. Well and good! Only I tell you, make up your mind before dinner what price you will ask and stick to it, for my brother-in-law, who was formerly an officer in our Navy, drinks terribly, especially champagne, but is never drunk. Also you have a cargo of coal in the *Fairy Queen*. That is most lucky, because there is none here. The *Amstel* cannot leave for her cruise on the New Guinea coast because she is short of coal. I will sell your coal for such a price as you do not expect, but the *Fairy Queen* is your business. You understand, I do not care to sell a steamer to my own brother-in-law."

By this time the ponies were whirling them through yet another lovely garden, and drew up at the marble portico of a villa even more palatial than Van Papendrecht's.

In another moment Northwood was presented to Van Swoll and Madame van Swoll. The ex-naval officer was a man of fine, commanding presence, arrayed in spotless white, who wore his decoration of the Netherlands Lion with an easy dignity which characterized all his actions. Madame van Swoll, who looked young enough to be his daughter, was Van Papendrecht's sister, but what a contrast there was between this slender, elegant girl and her fat and almost shapeless brother! All traces of native blood had somehow disappeared in the lady, who would have passed anywhere as a very distinguished European brunette. She possessed a very lovely olive complexion, with a faint flush of colour which was most charming.

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Perhaps people who are skilled in such details might have detected a strain of native blood in the colour and curve of her finger-nails, but that was a very minute detail of which Northwood knew nothing. It struck him very forcibly, however, that Cornelius looked a veritable nigger in comparison with his sister, who was not only exceedingly pretty but gifted with a great charm of manner, a native as well as a distinctly cultured grace.

Later in the evening Northwood learned that Coralie van Swoll had spent three or four years of her life in Paris. Meantime, his hostess made not the slightest effort to come the Parisienne over him. Whatever toilettes Madame van Swoll might have in her hanging wardrobes, they remained there for that night. She simply presented herself on this occasion in the purely native *sarong* and *kabayah*, so frequently worn by Dutch ladies in Netherlands India. It is true that the snowy *kabayah* was a costly creation of linen batiste and lace, while a perfectly marvellous *sarong* was kept in its place by a broad belt of native gold. Madame van Swoll had not troubled to put on so much as a pair of stockings. Her exquisitely pretty feet were protected by a pair of velvet shoes embroidered in seed pearls, set off by gilt heels. As often as not she would slip one of her feet out of her slippers. Her perfectly regular features and beautiful eyes were singularly expressive and winsome, and she allowed a wealth of delightful soft, dark-brown hair to hang to her waist.

Of course, the woman was a horrid coquette. Johnnie was rather scandalized to find that she had really so very little clothing about her, but, after all, it appeared to him that that was Van Swoll's affair, and Van Swoll seemed to be quite happy and pleased about everything in general.

The dinner was a good deal more European in its style than the beautiful but barbaric tiffin at Van Papendrecht's. There was a julienne soup which might have made its appearance at any table in London; a remarkably fine fish,

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served plain boiled, with *sauce aux écrevisses*, and some excellent preserved asparagus with *sauce hollandaise* kept up the illusion of European civilization in Ternate, until it was dispelled by the apparition of some of the most heavenly and varied curries and sambals ever cooked by human fingers. Johnnie tasted his first land-crab, a queer creature, more like a lobster than a crab in appearance, which, instead of swimming in the briny ocean, contentedly climbs coco-nut trees, and, breaking the nuts open with its powerful claws, devours the contents, which impart a particularly delicious flavour to its flesh.

Johnnie found himself, *malgré lui*, pitching into these captivating dishes with a perfectly unholy gusto. Van Swoll showed himself a powerful trencherman; Van Papendrecht made a perfect pig of himself, while even Madame played a very pretty knife and fork—and spoon! With the European dishes a very choice Liebfraumilch was served, but when it came to the curries and sambals Van Swoll roundly declared that if beer was good, champagne was even better at such a time. Accordingly a splendid champagne of one of the best vintages now foamed in their glasses. It went nobly with the curries. Undoubtedly Van Swoll was quite right. The two Dutchmen drank up their wine like the veritable sandbanks which they happened to be, while they constantly urged Johnnie to follow their example. Madame drank two or three, or perhaps even four, glasses on this rare and particular occasion. Johnnie was not quite sure whether at one time he did not feel the soft, delicate pressure of a very small bare foot on his thin shoe.

The dinner came to an end with sweets, fruits, superb coffee, with some notable cognac, and various seductive liqueurs labelled Marie Brizard and Roger.

After dinner everybody went to the big moonlit verandah to enjoy the soft night air. The two Dutchmen walked up and down the whole length of it, eagerly discussing something which absorbed their whole attention. Mean-

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while, Coralie van Swoll and Johnnie had automatically drifted into a dark corner of the verandah, and were soon talking in subdued tones of Paris, Fontainebleau, Barbizon, and places far away. A sort of subtle perfume, which emanated from the woman, enervated and excited Johnnie. He began to lose his head. Finally, he said dreamily : " Not even in France can you find such a delicious scene as this ! " They gazed for a moment on the fairyland and the glittering waters before them, and then their eyes met. Coralie van Swoll slipped her hand in his, as she answered him : " It *is* beautiful, it *is* lovely ; but if you only knew ! *Si vous saviez !* "

But Johnnie was destined to know nothing more on this particular occasion, because just then the guttural voice of Cornelius broke upon his ear with : " Well, Mr. Northwood, what about business ? I promised you some business for this evening ! " Johnnie pulled himself together, with the feeling that he had been getting into pretty dangerous ground half a minute before. However, he expressed himself quite ready for the fray, while he marvelled at people who slept all day, with intervals for eating and drinking, and did their business by moonlight. Madame, as cheerful and collected as ever, wished everyone a bright good-night, and melted out of their sight through a moonlit archway, a veritable vision of grace and loveliness.

" Now," said Cornelius, " we must make out a plan of campaign this evening ; but just one word in private with you. How much do you want for the *Fairy Queen* ? Have you quite made up your mind ? "

" Certainly I have. My price is one hundred thousand guilders exactly ! "

" It's a lot of money, but I daresay you will get it. If that is your price, stick to it. Just wait a minute. I will write it down for you in case you forget it ! "

To Northwood's amusement Cornelius tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, wrote one hundred thousand guilders on it and handed it to him.

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Then they went into Van Swoll's cabinet, where they found him sitting at a huge mahogany table with drawers fitted in it, and elaborately decorated with bronze devices of very fine workmanship, a singularly massive piece of furniture and evidently of another century. At such a table might have sat a Spanish Governor, a Spanish General, and a Familiar of the Holy Church, planning one of the massacres which were so frequent in the blood-stained annals of the Spice Islands.

However, to-night the meeting was of quite another description. First of all Van Papendrecht wanted to know what was to be done about Captain Hardy, now at Ternate with a cargo of rice, petroleum, etc. Since his arrival at Ternate Hardy had been denouncing the Northwoods as bloodsuckers and monopolists, although he blamed "that scoundrel Shelby" for being at the bottom of his misfortunes. Hardy did not mind Shelby trading in the *Ceylon*, but when it came to the Northwoods' establishing him at Amboina, and setting up agencies and trading-posts everywhere, while they worked with both sailing vessels and steamers against his one old ship, he felt that he had no chance, and was being infamously treated by his own son-in-law, Shelby, and his oldest friend, Northwood. However, Hardy was putting up a bold fight, as might have been expected of such a man. He had plenty of money, and his avowed plan was to keep prices of the staple articles lower in the Moluccas than in Singapore, while he could disorganize the produce-market by offering more for cloves and nutmegs than they could possibly fetch when sold again. Of course, as Hardy said, such a policy would cost him a lot of money, but it would make things very hot indeed for the Northwood-Shelby lot, especially as their expenses must be at least ten times his own. Hardy said he would win in the end and keep his own trade. In pursuance of his ideas he had proclaimed by drum and bell a series of auctions, at which rice and other valuable cargo were to be knocked down

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for anything which buyers chose to offer, just to break the market for Northwood and teach him a lesson. Such a thing had never been attempted in sleepy Ternate before, and there was great excitement about it.

Cornelius suggested a diabolical plan of his own for putting up a man of straw to buy up Hardy's cargo very cheap and then hold it for normal prices, and thus fighting the devil with fire, make a handsome profit out of their enemy.

Young Northwood took charge of the situation at once. He said: "Hardy's plan is all nonsense, and chiefly bluff. He cannot beat us in the way he proposes, for the simple reason that he and his old *Victory* cannot be in half a dozen places at once. Now I want it distinctly understood that I have no wish to ruin Hardy. Van Papendrecht will excuse me if I say his suggestion is nonsense also, because old Hardy knows this market much too well to allow us to buy much of his cargo through a man of straw. Now, I am going to leave the Ternate market to Captain Hardy this trip, that is to say, I am not going to land any rice or oil to compete with his shipments in the *Victory*. You can have as much of the other cargo in the *Alastor* as you require. I understand you want corrugated iron, nails and screws, and all sorts of things which Shelby ordered for you. You have the manifest, and if you will just tick off what you want and give me a list before I go off to the ship to-night, I will have it all ready to be discharged into your boats directly they come alongside. But no rice or oil. And, please let it be once more understood that I wish no harm to old Captain Hardy. There is plenty of room for him in the Moluccas!"

Cornelius van Papendrecht was much astonished at this declaration. He knew perfectly well that it was Shelby's plan to drive his old father-in-law out of the islands as rapidly as possible, and here was young Northwood, instead of profiting by a splendid chance to deal a heavy blow at Captain Hardy, actually protecting his

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interests, and making a market for his enemy in Ternate ! Was it champagne ? Van Swoll, with a much clearer perception of the actual position, rose from his chair and grasped Northwood's hand warmly as he said : " I understand ! It shall be done as you wish."

Cornelius thought this sort of thing was the biggest nonsense imaginable, and felt completely mystified.

The next thing to be settled was the cruise of the *Alastor*. Van Papendrecht sketched it out thus : Amboina, Banda, and then the New Guinea coast, a run of some twelve hundred miles to Geelvink Bay, taking Manzanam and Doreh on the outward run, and calling at Waigiou and Salawati on the homeward route, which was to include another call at the three principal ports of the Spice Islands, and then the *Alastor* would be free to sail with a full and valuable cargo of gums and spices for Singapore. It was a big proposition, but Van Papendrecht knew what he was talking about, and put his case very clearly. Van Swoll gave the whole scheme his approval, and when Van Papendrecht volunteered to join the *Alastor* on her cruise to New Guinea, Northwood unhesitatingly accepted his proposals.

It appeared that Van Papendrecht did a queer and singularly lucrative trade with Paris in the skins of birds of paradise, and other rare and beautiful birds, which apparently were sold to museums and milliners at enormous prices. Van Papendrecht wanted to take fifty hunters with him to shoot birds, while Van Swoll was anxious to send some thirty or forty divers for pearl-shell. Terms were agreed for the transport of all these people, which left a large profit for Northwood. A freight contract was also agreed, which left an exceedingly generous margin, though the two Dutchmen could easily afford it, as they were making some hundreds per cent. out of the business.

These important points being settled, Van Swoll rang a bell, which summoned as if by magic some sort of native sprite with a silver tray, on which were displayed a bottle

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of champagne and three large and very thin glasses. "It is very hot," said Van Swoll, "and all this talking makes me thirsty!" The three crystal goblets being filled, Van Swoll drank to Northwood's health. The graceless Cornelius had already drained his glass, and was now ringing for another bottle.

The weightiest matter of all now came on the board. Van Swoll refilled the glasses, and said carelessly enough to Northwood: "Now, what will you take for the *Fairy Queen*?"

"Exactly one hundred thousand guilders! No more, no less!" answered Northwood.

Van Swoll professed to treat this offer as an attempt to be funny.

"Say fifty thousand, my young friend. Isn't that enough?"

Meanwhile, Cornelius had finished yet another bottle, felt sleepy, reeled to a long chair, into which he fell in a lump, and began to snore so tremendously, that the victim of too much champagne became a nuisance and an interruption to serious conversation. The ever alert Van Swoll rang his little silver bell, and indicated with a nod of his head his slumbering brother-in-law. In a trice four servants came in, who, silently lifting the long chair from the floor, walked off bodily with Van Papendrecht.

"They will put him to bed, and you will see that by six o'clock to-morrow morning he will be all right. If Cornelius had not been drinking five or six dozen *pahits* during the day, together with some bottles of beer and a few bottles of wine, he would not have got so sleepy over my champagne—which, by the way, I took much trouble in selecting."

So said Van Swoll, as he ordered yet another bottle of his favourite drink.

The debate about the *Fairy Queen* was resumed, and when after a long discussion Van Swoll had increased his offer to ninety thousand guilders, Northwood, from sheer

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weariness and champagne combined, felt inclined to give in. But he remembered Cornelius's little slip of paper, which he took out of his pocket and laid on the table, much as a man plays a trump card. Van Swoll laughed as he looked at it and said: "Well, if you and Cornelius have settled the price between you, I may as well pay it. It is therefore decided that I pay you one hundred thousand guilders for the *Fairy Queen*. Let us say fifty thousand in cash to-morrow and fifty thousand in three months. Will that suit you? Of course, I know I am paying a big price for a small steamer that is not very new, but I want such a boat very much; and, besides, it is not so difficult to make a hundred thousand guilders in these islands if one knows how!"

The *Fairy Queen* being sold to Van Swoll on terms which were entirely acceptable and most profitable, Northwood prepared to take his leave. He much regretted that he could not accept an invitation to sleep on shore that night, as he had pressing work in the early morn, and a boat's crew waiting for him on the beach. Nor would he hear of a carriage being ordered for him. He insisted that a walk to the beach would do him all the good in the world. So, after a final bumper to celebrate the *Fairy Queen* transaction, Johnnie was at last able to say good-night to the hospitable Van Swoll, who urged him to come to the house as often as he could, and to make it his home.

Although the moon shone brilliantly, two servants bearing lanterns marched before Northwood to escort him to his boat, while Lion brought up the rear of the little procession. A brisk walk soon took the party within sight of the white boat lying on the beach, when Johnnie dismissed the servants. But on reaching the boat he could find no sailors. In vain did he search and shout for his men. Lion barked long and loud without any other result than that of terribly frightening the inhabitants of the neighbouring *kampung*. The predicament was provoking enough. Suddenly Johnnie noticed the masts and spars

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of the *Amstel* lying at the wharf, and as a last resource he determined to see what assistance he could get on board the Dutch gunboat. Soon the crazy wharf creaked under his footsteps, and a minute later he was on the main-deck of His Netherlands Majesty's ship *Amstel*. He was promptly challenged by a native quartermaster, to whom he explained the situation. The quartermaster went for an officer, a very polite young lieutenant, who did not seem to object in the least to being roused from his slumbers.

Finding that his nocturnal visitor could not speak Dutch, the lieutenant said in Malay: "I am afraid your sailors have deserted. It is a great trouble in all these islands that the men run away from their ships. It is a very easy life, and the women are a great temptation. I shall be very glad to send you off to your steamer in one of our boats."

Johnnie expressed his apologies and warmest thanks, and the boat having been manned silently and rapidly, it only remained to seat himself in it. Lion took his place by his master with much dignity. He was already getting used to ladders and boats.

As he was being rowed over the moonlit waters, Johnnie wondered what would happen to a wandering Dutchman turning up on the deck of a British gunboat at two a.m.? His thoughts speedily turned in other directions, however. It had been a day of varied incidents, and he had enough to think about at the moment.

There being apparently no watch of any kind kept by the *Alastor's* crew that night, Johnnie and Lion got on board quite unperceived, and after a final look at the glories of Ternate the young man turned in at about three in the morning. He was aroused shortly after daybreak by the noise of the sailors washing decks overhead, whereupon he put himself into a pair of bathing-drawers and ran on deck. Here he found Lion eagerly waiting for him. The pair of them then went overboard for a splendid swim in deliciously clear cool water. Feeling mightily revived by

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his bath, Johnnie regained his cabin, and donning a white drill suit went on the quarter-deck.

He had just settled down to his tea and biscuits, when to his surprise he saw Van Papendrecht before him, got up with his usual neatness in spotless white, looking as fresh as paint, and as if he had never seen a bottle of champagne in his life. Coffee having been ordered for his visitor, the closing events of the previous night were recited for the benefit of Van Papendrecht, who was much pleased that the *Fairy Queen* had been sold on terms which were satisfactory to all concerned. It appeared that Van Swoll had estates in Ternate, Amboina and Banda, besides a pearling fishery near Manzanam, so that a handy little steamer could be employed by him most usefully and profitably.

Captain Bird grumbled dreadfully when he heard of the desertion of his sailors. There was nothing for it, however, but to send Cassim on shore with a party to find the missing men if possible, and to bring back the ship's gig.

Van Papendrecht's boats having come alongside, and the cargo started, Northwood and his agent went on shore. Here there was great excitement. Between a man beating a drum and another ringing a bell walked a native crier shouting at the top of his voice that at ten a.m. Captain Hardy of the *Victory* would commence selling a cargo of rice, petroleum, etc., at the lowest prices ever heard of in Ternate. Further, that at four p.m. that day, Tuan Blaremergh, of the Batjan Company, would sell by auction splendid cottons, shirtings, linens and all sorts of manufactures which the said Tuan was prepared to *buang* (throw away), whereupon the drum was beaten and the bell rung with redoubled vigour, to the amusement of the crowd.

Van Papendrecht said: "I don't believe there has been a *lelong* (auction) in Ternate for any number of years, and now there are to be two in one day! No wonder the market is excited!"

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Just then they met Captain Hardy. Johnnie walked up to him and wished him good-morning, but the old sailor simply glared at him and turned his back. Johnnie felt sorry enough about the situation.

"Captain Hardy takes it very badly," Cornelius said. "He grabbed that huge umbrella of his by the middle as if he would like to have knocked you down with it."

Nobody had ever seen Captain Hardy use his famous umbrella as a defence against either wind or rain, and its loose folds hung uselessly round a huge hardwood stick, terminating in a formidable knob. It was believed that this umbrella was built during the Spanish conquest of the Moluccas, and that it was the only one of its kind in existence.

Van Papendrecht wished Johnnie to attend the auction, but this he declined to do out of respect for old Hardy's feelings. So it was settled between them that Cornelius should remain to see what happened, while Johnnie went off to consult BlareMBERGH about some Batjan business.

The Batjan Company's building was but a short distance from the market-place in which Captain Hardy's auction was to be held. Crossing a wide verandah, Johnnie found himself in a large room, of which the walls were tapestried with different samples of cloth, piles of which material were to be seen on all sides. Coils of brass wire, barrels of beads, kegs of nails, cases of axes, saws, gin, and a vast selection of other merchandise littered the place in amazing variety.

Four silent natives appeared to mount guard over this emporium. In a private room leading off this deserted bazaar, Johnnie beheld a tall, good-looking young man, with a fine head of fair hair and a nice curly beard, reclining full length on a long chair, deep in the opening pages of a French novel. Conveniently to his hand stood a long tumbler nearly full of a pale amber fluid, which looked as if it might be cool and nice to drink. As Johnnie was ushered into this private room by one of the natives, the

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young blonde giant, who wore a light pyjama suit, slid out of his chair with an easy grace, and remarked : "Trenck van Blaremergh!" to which Johnnie promptly replied : "Northwood!"

"Ah! and so you are the Mr. Northwood of whom we have heard so much. Pray be seated, and try to make yourself comfortable. It is most kind of you to honour me with a visit!"

The Dutchman rattled out his greeting in a most delightfully pronounced English, and Johnnie took to him at once.

Blaremergh was the descendant of a very ancient Dutch family. He possessed such an unending string of names, that the wits of Ternate used to assert that he never knew one half of them himself. In that respect and in many others he was like a Spanish Grandee.

His first care was to see that his visitor had something to drink. "Try my mixture, will you not?" said the hospitable Dutchman. "Just some *Moselblümchen* with a little apollinaris stirred up with half a teaspoonful of sugar. It is quite nice and can do you no harm."

Johnnie found that a good Moselle treated in this way was most refreshing on a hot morning. Having accommodated his visitor with another long chair and told off a native to fan him, Blaremergh began to talk business. He wanted the *Alastor* to go to Batjan for a variety of purposes, and would pay handsomely for the service rendered. His company was having a steamer built especially for the trade, but in the meantime communications with Batjan were difficult.

The terms about the *Alastor* being settled in something like five minutes, Blaremergh started on indifferent subjects. He wanted to know why his visitor took so little interest in Captain Hardy's famous auction.

Johnnie explained as best he could his position with regard to Hardy.

Blaremergh listened to him, and then said, very quietly : "I see you are a different kind of man altogether from

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Shelby! Well, Captain Hardy's auction put it into my head to have one of my own to clear off all the rubbish I have in that shop outside. I came to the Moluccas with the idea that the Batjan Company, which has a great capital, would employ me in working the magnificent forests and mines of their island, or something of that kind. But I find that I am expected to sell pieces of cloth and bottles of gin! However, it will come all right in time. This is but a probationary stage!"

Just then Van Papendrecht, usually so phlegmatic, burst into the room wild with excitement and convulsed with laughter. "What do you think?" he shouted; "the auction is over already! Captain Hardy put up a thousand bags of Rangoon white rice as the first lot. After saying a lot of horrible things about you and Shelby, he declared that he would sell at any price to drive you out of Ternate. When he called for bids Towkay Kim Seng, the fat Capitan China, had the impudence to offer one guilder per bag, about what it will cost to land the rice from the *Victory*. Old Hardy got blue in the face; he first of all called the towkay a silly, squinting, block-faced son of a Chinese what's-her-name, and before anybody could stop him he had his umbrella up in the air and brought the knob of it down on the skull of the Capitan China, who fell on the ground howling, and had to be carried away by his friends. Old Hardy simply said '*lelong suda habis*' (the auction is finished), then he got into his boat and went off to the *Victory*! The Chinese are furious about it! A deputation of them has gone to the Resident to petition him to refuse Captain Hardy his clearance papers, so that they can have time to prosecute him and have him sent to prison. A nice mess Captain Hardy has made of it with his auction! You should have seen how the people bolted when he knocked the Capitan China down!"

At this point Cornelius helped himself to a glass of Moselle, and once more laughed uproariously as he recalled the scene which he had just witnessed.

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Captain Hardy's ideas of conducting an auction were so original as to be almost amusing, but it was easy to see that by his rashness the old sailor had put himself in a serious position. Now was the time to attack him, and deal him a blow that he could hardly withstand. Cornelius urged our hero to sell the *Alastor's* cargo in Ternate, leaving the *Ceylon's* cargo for Amboina and Banda. This would leave the Captain without a market. The *Alastor* could be back again in Ternate with a fresh cargo before Hardy could get over his difficulties with the Chinese, or sell his own cargo still on board the *Victory*. It would be quite an easy thing practically to ruin Hardy, and thus get rid of his competition.

But Northwood did not show the slightest desire to crush his opponent, and turned the conversation in another direction.

Blarembergh insisted on keeping both his visitors to a very excellent tiffin, after which they drove off to Van Papendrecht's home, the host to indulge in a siesta, and Johnnie to write letters in the library.

About four p.m. Cornelius said: "Let us see how Blarembergh gets on with his auction! It is time we went."

In a few minutes they were back at the Batjan Company's offices. The verandahs and the large store-room were crowded with excited natives, eager to buy all sorts of things very cheap. The auction of the morning and its sudden collapse was the topic of the day, but everybody said that there was no fear of Tuan Blarembergh striking anyone, and that with him they were quite safe. Although it was past the appointed hour, there was no sign of Blarembergh yet.

Forcing their way through the crowd Cornelius and Johnnie got a glimpse of him through the nearly closed door of his private room. Gently opening the door, they now got a good view of him, still lying at full length with his nose in the concluding pages of his French novel. The

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sound of the unusual noise and bustle outside seemed to worry him, for he suddenly asked his major-domo what it meant. On his being reminded that it was already time for the auction to commence, Blaremergh said, irritably enough: "*Lelong? Bilang sia suda p'nat!* Auction? Say I am tired! Tell the people to go away at once. There will be no auction to-day. Shut that door behind me!"

As the door closed on him, Blaremergh plunged into his romance with greater avidity than ever. His very beautiful but highly improper heroine had got into a French dilemma of such complexity that Blaremergh found it quite impossible to tear himself away from her in order to conduct a vulgar sale by auction. The natives filed slowly and discontentedly out of the place. They were horribly disappointed. Some of them said it would have been much better if Tuan Blaremergh knocked one or two of them down, rather than play them a trick like this!

Cornelius was once more bubbling over with merriment. "They will never be able to sell anything more by auction in Ternate!" he cried. "Fancy two auctions in one day, and the only lot knocked down is the Capitan China!"

Once more *chez* Cornelius and Johnnie suggested a small dinner on board the *Alastor*, to which Blaremergh might be invited. Johnnie had taken care to have ample supplies sent on board, including some very sound wines, such as are to be found in the Dutch colonies. Cornelius thought the idea was a good one, especially as Blaremergh must have finished his French novel by this time.

The dinner on board the *Alastor* made a pleasant change in its way for Blaremergh and Van Papendrecht, which both of them appreciated immensely. Incidentally, a whole lot of exceedingly useful business details were settled. Northwood arranged that the *Alastor* would sail the next evening for Amboina and *viâ* various ports to Geelvink Bay. There being plenty of cabins to spare, Northwood's guests slept on board the *Alastor* that night.

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No sooner had he landed next morning with his friends, than he was met by Van Swoll, who reproached him for having neglected him most shamefully. "My wife really does not know what to think of you!" he said.

In these circumstances Johnnie cheerfully accepted Van Swoll's invitation to tiffin.

Coralie van Swoll greeted her guests most graciously. This time she was got up in a white linen frock, of an absolutely perfect cut, reminiscent of Paris. Everything, from the artistic arrangement of her beautiful hair to her exceedingly dainty stockings and shoes, was in harmony. Every trace of the Asiatic had vanished. Madame van Swoll playfully rallied Northwood about his giving a dinner on board the *Alastor* without inviting any ladies, and represented herself as having waited in vain for him the whole of the previous day.

After the usual superb *rijstafel*, loaded with delicacies, neither Van Swoll nor his brother-in-law could resist their longing for a siesta, and went to their rooms for an afternoon nap, leaving Coralie and Johnnie together. It was not long before the young couple were on very dangerous ground. That Coralie flirted outrageously was soon apparent. But afterwards she began to talk seriously, to regret her life in Paris, and finally to tell Johnnie that though her husband was kind enough in his way, yet she had ceased to have any attraction for him. She was a wife in name only. Others pleased Van Swoll much more than she did, and as she made this confession the tears dimmed her lovely eyes.

Johnnie was profoundly stirred. Mad, unconsidered words poured from his lips in a torrent. He moved towards her and in a moment Coralie was in his arms, covering his face with burning kisses. As Johnnie was not made of quite the same material as Captain Hardy's umbrella he returned her caresses with interest. The time flew in a wild and by no means commendable conversation, somewhat on the lines of Blarebergh's French novel, until the

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sounds about the house told the indiscreet couple that the hour of siesta was over, and that they had better behave themselves like ordinary members of society.

Presently, the two Dutchmen came into view, deeply immersed in a conversation about business affairs. To Johnnie, who had barely recovered his composure, the absolute indifference of Van Swoll to his beautiful young wife seemed to be most marked.

After a short consultation it was agreed that all present should dine on board the *Alastor*, and that the steamer should proceed some time during the evening to Amboina.

The little dinner on board of the *Alastor* was quite gay and delightful in every way. Madame van Swoll seemed loth to quit the ship, in spite of Captain Bird's broadest hints to the effect that he wanted to clear certain dangers while the light of the moon was still bright. Finally the Van Swolls got into their boat, and before long Johnnie Northwood was waving his handkerchief to Coralie over the stern of his ship, as the churning screw sped her through the still waters of Ternate harbour.

Johnnie little thought that he was fated to see Coralie only once more for a terribly brief moment under some of the most tragic circumstances that human imagination can conceive.

After gazing at the glorious scene before him, which somehow soothed his tumultuous thoughts, Johnnie turned round with a thumping heart, and said to Cornelius: "How perfectly lovely it all is, and what a happy man you are to live in a paradise like this!"

"Yes," Cornelius replied indifferently. "It is very fine, but Ternate is not always like this. It has its dangers also!" and he pointed significantly to the summit of the volcano, from which a thin film of vapour floated.

After a fine passage the *Alastor* steamed into the harbour of Amboina, and Captain Bird anchored her astern of the *Ceylon*. Shelby was soon on board, anxious to have the latest news. He got perfectly furious when he heard of

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his father-in-law's escape from ruin, or something very much like it, thanks to Northwood's tactics. His little pigs'-eyes glared with fury, and his ugly face looked so utterly villainous that Johnnie's soul quaked within him at the thought that he intended to make this man his partner.

Shelby finally said something about young Northwood's "selling the lot of them for the sake of Mary Hardy."

This was more than Johnnie could stand, and after a violent scene Shelby quieted down, and even made some sort of apology. "I am sorry!" he grumbled, "but Old Hardy knows the Moluccas and the people know old Hardy. You had him at your mercy, and some day you will be the very first to regret that you didn't hit him when he was down. I've sailed with Old Hardy, and I know the kind of man he is! The first chance he gets he'll stick his knife into you right up to the handle. He'll take it as an insult to his infernal pride that you left him the Ternate market open, instead of capturing it for us. That's what Hardy would call a fair fight, but he'll never forgive you for letting him off as you've done!"

Unfortunately even Johnnie could not help but feel that there was a good deal of truth in what Shelby said. However, the quarrel was now over. It was no doubt regrettable that it had taken place in the presence of Van Papendrecht, Bird, and McCracken, who all seemed mightily interested in the scene.

Something like peace and order having been restored, Northwood was at liberty to have a look at Amboina. There is a vast difference between Ternate and Amboina. It is vain to seek in the latter place the splendours of Ternate and Tidore. But Amboina has its own peculiar charm. The long, narrow, sheltered inlet which forms the harbour is surrounded by soft, rolling hills covered with the most glorious forests imaginable. A serene atmosphere of peace and quiet characterizes the place.

No volcanoes threatened the tranquillity of Amboina, but

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the town, mildly prosperous, resembles that of Ternate. White villas surrounded by shady gardens, neat native *kampongs*, a little bit of a fort flying the Dutch colours, and a little bit of a Dutch gunboat, made up the picture as it appeared to Northwood from the deck of the *Alastor*.

Shelby's house was very much on the same plan as the villas of Van Papendrecht and Van Swoll, but whitewashed brick pillars and tiles replaced the marble columns and pavements of the wealthy Dutchmen. The Shelby establishment was surrounded by blocks of godowns mostly crammed with merchandise of all kinds. The whole establishment suggested an overflowing prosperity.

Shelby was a man of very moderate habits, who instinctively preferred water to any other beverage. If he ever drank anything else, he did so purely for business purposes. If there was anything like a "deal" in hand, he would drink gin or champagne with his Dutch friends until all was blue, just as he would have drunk so much petroleum if sufficient inducement offered. He also ate astonishingly little, hardly anything, in fact, and was yet prodigiously fat. A most remarkable man altogether!

Mrs. Shelby received Northwood very kindly. She afforded a great contrast to her younger sister, the beautiful and stately Mary Hardy. Mrs. Shelby struck Johnnie as being rather a commonplace young woman, of about the average height, with nothing to recommend her but a pleasant, unaffected manner, which in some mysterious way caused everyone to like her enormously at first sight. Why she had elected to marry a penniless brute like her father's chief officer had been one of the conundrums of Singapore for a few brief hours. But Shelby was a strong man, who having made up his mind to marry the elder Miss Hardy, succeeded in this, as in many other matters.

After tiffin, the captain, who had acquired the siesta habit, went to bed, leaving his wife to entertain Johnnie

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Northwood. Our luckless hero found himself in for another sensational experience during the hottest hours of a blazing afternoon, when all other living creatures slunk into such shadows as could be found for shelter from the quivering air. Poor Mrs. Shelby, who had been told by her husband in the crudest terms what had happened at Ternate, was torn by conflicting emotions. She was absolutely loyal to her husband, she was desperately devoted to her fine old father, and she looked upon Johnnie as the only man in the world fit to marry her beautiful and adored sister Mary. The situation was rather too much for a very sweet woman of no great strength of character. While the snores of the sleeping Shelby shook the house, his devoted wife was trying to reconcile the most conflicting interests with the aid of Johnnie Northwood, whom she knew to be a kind-hearted and honest creature.

Johnnie soon made it clear to her that the difficulties before them were not of his creation, but arose entirely from the obstinacy of her father and the greed of her husband. Mrs. Shelby suddenly saw the situation with all its consequences in the blackest colours, and burst into a flood of tears. How it all happened goodness knows, but the poor lady, feeling that she must cling to something, threw herself into Johnnie's arms and wept freely all over him. Just then Captain Bird and Mr. McCracken entered the room. Mrs. Shelby fled to her bedroom with a wild shriek loud enough to wake the dead—though it left her husband still snoring—thus placing the three men in a very awkward position. Bird was evidently in a poisonous frame of mind, and McCracken as obviously discomposd.

“Have you come to see me?” asked Johnnie, somewhat irritably, of his captain.

“Yes, we did,” said Bird; “but we will explain our business some other time. In the meantime, I may tell you that I feel it my duty in the cause of morality to

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inform Captain Shelby at the first opportunity of what I have just seen in his house ! ”

“ You may tell the devil if it suits you ! ” roared Johnnie Northwood in high dudgeon. “ I wish you would look after your ship instead of spying about on shore into things which don't in the least concern you. Go away, both of you ! ”

The men went sullenly away, leaving Johnnie to reflect that in some mysterious manner trouble breeds with marvellous rapidity in islands blessed with too much loveliness and fertility.

Shortly afterwards Captain and Mrs. Shelby returned from their rooms, and they all sat down to tea in the verandah. Johnnie told Shelby exactly what had taken place, and the mischief which might be made of the incident on board the *Alastor*. Shelby simply laughed. He knew better than to imagine that there could be love-passages between the mother of his children and Johnnie Northwood.

Captain Shelby realized, however, that it was a thing not to be made into a scandal, and said that he would put a stop to it. Meanwhile, Mrs. Shelby would take Johnnie for a drive, while he walked to the office in order to have it out with the indiscreet visitors, who were no doubt anxiously watching their opportunity. Well, they should have it !

The two conspirators had been eagerly discussing the position. Here was Northwood, though so much in love with Mary Hardy as to allow her father to ruin the Northwood and Shelby interests in Ternate, discovered with Shelby's wife in his arms the very day of his arrival at Amboina !

“ Such a man is a monster of iniquity, who *must* be exposed and punished ! ” shouted Captain Bird.

The more cautious McCracken suggested that they might wait a little for more ample proofs of the guilt of the erring couple ; but Bird was for instant action and would brook no delay. He would take the matter in hand himself ;

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all that McCracken had to do was to bear witness to his statements.

On entering his office, Shelby was confronted by the pair of moralists eager to acquit themselves of their painful duty. He pretended not to be able to understand why they wanted to talk to him *privately*. However, as Bird insisted that the matter was both private and urgent, he took them into an inner room and closed the door, with: "Now, gentlemen, fire away and let's hear what this wonderful business is! Found a gold-mine? Struck oil? or what is it?"

With various remarks about the cause of morality, the sacredness of the marriage-tie, and personal dishonour in its most horrible form, Captain Bird finally told Shelby of his wife's misconduct with Johnnie Northwood.

"So *that's* your story!" cried the angry husband. "You *are* a nice pair of blackguards! I guess you hounds don't know that Johnnie Northwood has been brought up with the Hardy children as a baby, almost from the day he was born? But what's that got to do with a pair of dirty ruffians like you? If Mr. Northwood marries Miss Hardy, does it concern two slinking skunks like you? If my wife looks on Mr. Northwood as her brother, is it my business or yours? You are a couple of curs anyway! Nothing to do on board your ship, eh? So you earn your wages by coming sneaking and spying round on shore! You, Bird! You got your first command from Captain Northwood, and as for you, McCracken, you've been eating the Northwood bread for years and buttered it handsomely, I guess! I hear your bills at McAlister's are something great!"

At this point he stopped for a moment to enjoy the hangdog look of the two moralists; then, stepping up to Bird, he dealt that good young man a smart rap on the nose, evidently causing considerable pain.

"How dare you strike me!" yelled the captain of the *Alastor*.

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"I'm not exactly striking you," said Shelby. "I'm giving you a hint! That little punch on the nose was just a hint that you had better keep it out of my family affairs."

"I'd bash it in for him altogether! Or, if you like, I'll knock the stuffin' out of him myself for bringing me here to make a fool of me!"

Thus spoke the wily and shameless McCracken, who hastened to go over to the winning side without loss of time.

But Shelby merely replied: "I've had enough of this! I want you two scoundrels to go! There's the door! Get!"

Suiting the action to the word, he bundled them out of the office and chuckled to himself as he watched them shuffling down the road, quarrelling and wrangling with each other at every step.

Johnnie spent that evening pleasantly enough with the Shelby family, and had a good laugh at the discomfiture of his marine moralists. With Shelby, however, he agreed that it meant dismissing Bird immediately the *Alastor* returned to Singapore. Shelby was quite at his best and soothed his guest with prospects, solid and almost tangible, of brilliant success in the near future.

The next morning Northwood received a letter from Captain Bird, handing in his resignation. Northwood simply tore the thing up and took no notice of it.

In the afternoon he called by appointment on the Resident. Driving along a splendid road, level as a billiard-table, and bordered with magnificent trees, his equipage drew up in front of a very handsome villa standing in spacious grounds, to which lawns, shrubberies, fountains, and masses of flowers lent their charm.

The whole place looked singularly English to Northwood's eyes. Nor was he far wrong! The roads, the avenues, the very Residency itself were but the monuments of British enterprise in this forgotten island. *We*

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made the roads and built the Residency for the benefit of the Dutchmen of to-day.*

A bare-footed native soldier turned out of his sentry-box as Northwood drove up to the gates of the Residency. Lion had galloped all the way behind his master's carriage, and naturally wanted to go into the house with him, but the sentry strongly objected to *itu anjing*, so the poor dog had to be told to stop outside.

The Resident received his English visitor very politely, and after a short conversation on the blessings of steam navigation Northwood took his leave. On arriving at the gate he found Lion sitting solemnly in the sentry-box while the excited and perfectly furious native soldier was trying to turn him out of it. Every time the sentry made a pass at him with his bayonet Lion let out one of his magnificent deep barks, and the man shrank back. Lion immediately came bounding to the carriage in response to his master's call.

Northwood found that Shelby had organized everything very well indeed in Amboina. His wharves and warehouses were cleverly constructed and answered their purpose admirably. He was rather disgusted to find that

* The history of the Moluccas can be related only in a work of considerable length, and must therefore be treated very briefly here. Suffice it to say for the moment, that the Portuguese, after many adventures, captured Amboina in 1512. In 1605 the Dutch took the island from them. During 1623 occurred the infamous Massacre of Amboina, when the Dutch attacked the British Factory, authorized by the Netherlands Government to trade in cloves and other spices. The unhappy inhabitants of the British Factory were put to death by the Dutch under atrocious circumstances. Torture of the most barbarous description preceded the destruction of our countrymen, murdered for the simple reason that they interfered with the Dutch monopoly of the trade in spices, which at that time yielded fabulous profits.

In 1796 the British Admiral Rainier captured Amboina, but the Dutch got the island back again on the signature of the peace of Amiens. We recaptured Amboina in 1810, only to surrender the island with many other priceless possessions to the Dutch in 1814. The sheer imbecility of British policy in the Far East defies description.

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Shelby had opened a *toko*, or sort of retail store, in another part of the town.

"It makes its hundred per cent.!" urged Shelby.

"Well, isn't thirty or forty per cent. enough for you?" retorted Northwood. "Don't you see that your *toko* will make an enemy of every Dutchman in the island? You are in a position to undersell them in the retail trades, and, of course, they will curse us for being monopolists and bloodsuckers. Why can't you live and let live?"

This was a policy which Shelby could never grasp. He was a most insatiable man, and knowing that Northwood had half the purchase-money of the *Fairy Queen* on board of the *Alastor* was deep in a scheme for its absorption. He took Northwood over part of a very fine property, through which a small river ran, navigable for barges for a considerable distance. Several hundred acres in extent, this property bore some thousands of the very finest sago-palms Northwood had ever seen. Shelby proposed to erect a sago factory on the banks of the river, while an urgently-needed petroleum depôt and wharf could be placed at the mouth of the river, where the *Alastor* or *Ceylon* would be able to discharge case-oil under such conditions as to kill all competition in the petroleum trade. The whole of this splendid estate was for sale at fifty thousand guilders, precisely the sum then lying on board the *Alastor*.

"I'll guarantee to get that much out of the petroleum trade alone in less than three months," said Selby, "and the profits of the sago proposition ought to be double that much. Say the property with wharf, depôt and factory costs a hundred thousand guilders, you'll get your money back and a lot more besides every six months! How's that for a return on your money? You know right well you sold the *Fairy Queen* for at least double her value, so you can afford to go in for this property, which you can see for yourself is worth far more than the fifty thousand guilders asked for it."

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It was all very well for Shelby to talk like this, but he wanted money all the time. The more he made, the greater were his demands. Northwood thought rather ruefully that if he bought the estate, Shelby would next want a million guilders for some other particularly lucrative scheme. The man, clever and able as he had proved to be throughout, had an unquenchable thirst for clear cash, which needed something like the Bank of England to satisfy.

Still, the sago industry was a strong point with young Northwood; indeed, it had almost irresistible attractions for him, and when the wily Shelby promised to close his *toko* if Northwood would buy the Sungei Mas property, the thing was done. Our hero consented to buy the estate. Shelby got his way as usual, and it may be casually noted that he never closed his sinful *toko*, in which he sold gin, petroleum, and other necessaries of life at a clear profit of one hundred per cent.

Next day the boxes containing Van Swoll's first payment of fifty thousand guilders were put on shore and handed over to the owner of the Sungei Mas estate, a little dried-up notary, who merely required fifty thousand guilders in order that he might get himself comfortably buried in some particular spot in Holland, in which charming country he proposed to die at an early and convenient occasion.

When Van Papendrecht, who had been busy all the time amongst his Dutch friends in Amboina, heard of the deal, he said it was all right in its way, but that if he had been consulted the consideration might have been somewhat reduced. He even went so far as to say that the worthy Notarius, so anxious to depart this life and to be buried somewhere near Haarlem, was a notorious hard-liver, who bought the Sungei Mas estate some years previously for a case of gin!

Shelby, however, bluffed for all he was worth. Van Papendrecht's yarns were merely the outcome of a jocular

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spirit. The Sungei Mas was really to be a Golden River, as its native name indicated!

Next morning the steamer which Northwood had sold in Ternate arrived, flying the Dutch flag. She had been rechristened the *Coralie van Swoll*.

Van Swoll himself was a passenger on board of his steamer, and expressed himself as being delighted with his purchase. He brought the cheery news that he had sold all the coal that could be spared to H. N. M.'s gunboat *Amstel* at the comfortable rate of certain guilders, equal to three pounds per ton—which left Northwood a profit of about forty shillings per ton after paying commission and all other expenses.

The young man felt quite "velvety" over this stroke of business, and thanked his stars that it had occurred to him to send some coal to Amboina in the *Ceylon*. Indeed, the scarcity of coal was such, that without the reserve brought by the sailing ship, it would have been impossible for the *Alastor* to start on her cruise to sundry islands and New Guinea.

Van Swoll also brought tidings that Captain Hardy, having sent Towkay Kim Seng a very valuable and massive silver bowl, a telescope, and several pieces of scarlet silk, had made his peace with that magnate, who could not find it in his heart to refuse the old sailor's presents, which he greatly coveted. Captain Hardy was selling his cargo as fast as he liked, having persuaded the fickle folk of Ternate that Northwood was a "child of the devil," who would soon be punished by Tuan Allah in such a way as to make all mankind feel sorry for the wretched youth who had not dared to offer a single package of his cargo while the good old *Victory* rode to her anchors off Ternate.

Captain Bird had been sulking in his cabin ever since his interview with Shelby. The chief officer had taken charge of his ship under orders from the office. As the *Alastor* was about ready to sail, Northwood sent for Captain Bird, and after severely reprimanding him, asked him whether

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he intended to return to his duty, or to travel as a passenger to Singapore, where he would be dismissed in any case.

Bird had just sufficient sense to see that it would hardly suit his future career to throw up his first command in the middle of the voyage, nor would it be quite agreeable for him to hand over the captain's cabin and the chart-room to his chief officer, while he took up his quarters in the saloon; so in his surly way he said he would retain the command of the *Alastor* until the end of the voyage. Northwood looked hard at his captain to see if there was the least sign of regret, or of returning good-will in his face; but Bird was a hard-mouthed, stiff-necked young man, whose whole physiognomy conveyed mulish obstinacy and ill-feeling. Northwood sighed. He would like to have been able to take Bird's hand once more and make it up with him, but the thing was impossible.

After a long stay at Amboina the *Alastor* left for Banda. Owing to the state of affairs on board, Northwood and Van Papendrecht were left in undisturbed possession of the saloon and quarter-deck, an arrangement which they found very quiet and comfortable.

The island of Banda, which is really nothing but a volcanic peak, rising from the midst of the sea—the water being so deep all round the island that the *Alastor* was berthed at the end of the main streets of the place—supplies the whole world with its wants in the way of nutmegs and mace. It is truly a beautiful sight to see the dark-green nutmeg trees bending beneath the weight of their golden, peach-like fruit, transforming the whole island into one vast bouquet, mirrored with exquisite effect in its lovely waters. Away above the great nutmeg plantations rises the peak of Gunong Api, from which a column of smoke nearly always rises. It is looked upon as a bad sign, an indication of volcanic disturbance near at hand, when the peak shows quite clear.

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Banda is fortunate to be adorned with the only structure likely to heighten the interest and beauty of its landscape. The walls and towers of "Belgica" crown a hill dominating the town, adding a charm of surprise to the scene. This "Belgica," built in the sixteenth century, is something like Carisbrooke Castle, and is still held by a small garrison of Dutch soldiers.

At Banda a certain Mr. Theodoor Blankert, having been appointed Northwood's agent, he, together with Van Papendrecht, arranged all business matters, leaving Johnnie with plenty of time to look about him and enjoy himself. He never wearied of taking one of the ship's boats in which to float over the marvellous "sea gardens" of the island. The floor of the sea in the vicinity is absolutely carpeted with a marvellous collection of the most gloriously-coloured shells, corals, seaweeds and marine growths of all kinds. Shoals of fish glowing with all the colours of the rainbow give animation to the submarine scenery.

On one of his excursions Johnnie Northwood took it into his head to possess himself of a particularly rare and beautiful shell which lay gleaming splendidly just beneath his boat. To fling off his clothes and jump overboard was the work of a few moments, but he never reached that tempting shell. It was not until he had half drowned himself, expert swimmer and diver as he was, and was pulled panting into the boat, that he finally realized that the glittering prize, which in those translucent waters seemed almost within his grasp, lay many fathoms deep!

Another amusement which fitted in with the romantic twist of Johnnie Northwood's character was to moon about "Belgica," meditating on its terrific history. He had had the luck to get hold of a copy of Argensola's "History of the Moluccas," a very ancient book translated into monkish French by a forgotten priest. He had industriously pored over this book during the voyage, and as he gazed from one of the towers of the castle over

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the fairy-like scene, he tried to realize the bloody scenes of the olden days, when the Portuguese, Spaniards and Dutchmen warred on each other to obtain possession of Banda. There was a day when Sir Francis Drake pillaged the place to some purpose. Argensola has much to say about "François Dracq, le pirate anglais," and goes so far as to call the great English sailor a "heretic." To any man who has sailed these waters, the daring and skill of Drake and his crews, who found and fought their way through these unknown seas in their little bits of ships, seems to be nothing short of miraculous.

Northwood, having the right introductions, was most hospitably entertained by the genial Dutchmen of Banda. He was allowed to roam as he pleased about "Belgica." The delightful old castle has long since lost any possible value as a defensive work, and is now used as a sort of military prison for peccant soldiers, who seem to be on the most friendly terms with their guards, and to enjoy themselves to an astonishing degree.

Meanwhile various shipments of nutmegs and mace had been arranged for the return voyage. From Banda the *Alastor* was to sail for Batjan with a Dutch colonel, who was to take over the administration of the island, a number of Chinese miners, and a whole crowd of native carpenters, workmen and servants. Besides the passengers, there were large shipments of stores and materials for Batjan and the New Guinea coast.

Everything having been satisfactorily settled, the *Alastor* sailed for Batjan. During the voyage Johnnie found time to study his very curious passenger, the ex-colonel of the Dutch army, who would for a certain period, at least, control the destinies of Batjan. He was a small, wizened-looking creature, whose uninviting appearance was heightened by a kind of greyish goat's beard, which came to a point. The colonel had a trick of pulling and twisting the beard in all directions, sometimes with a rather weird effect. He had a very handsome, well-grown native body-

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servant with him, who contrasted very favourably indeed with his imperious master.

Johnnie was surprised to see this fine native crouch on all fours and strike his forehead on the deck every time he came to ask his master for his orders. "Ah! you are surprised!" remarked the colonel. "Thus shall every native of Batjan do in my presence. I will train them to it! It is my right!"

According to his own confession, the colonel was of a cruel and licentious disposition. Also, he was without the slightest indication of anything in the shape of the ability required to develop a colony on mercantile lines; yet this was precisely what his business happened to be. As a matter of fact, the colonel's days in Batjan were few and evil.

Batjan proved itself to be a very fine island, possessing an exceptionally commodious and sheltered harbour. It had not the florid loveliness of Ternate or Banda, but a certain wild beauty of its own was its especial charm. The island is covered with magnificent forests, which are said to contain endless quantities of very valuable timber, while its mineral resources are reputed to be something wonderful.

As the *Alastor* swung to her anchors off the Port of Penamboeah, Johnnie perceived that considerable sums of money had been spent in such works as wharves, warehouses, and roads which somehow had a trick of leaving off in the middle and remaining perfectly useless.

Once the colonel and his people were landed, no soul in Batjan seemed to have any further interest in the *Alastor* and her movements. Johnnie was burning to discharge his Batjan cargo and to be off on his long cruise to New Guinea. The worthy Cornelius did at last manage to get some cargo-boats alongside, which were promptly filled with building materials and stores of all kinds; but when the barges got to the shore, nobody could be found to discharge them, and so the rest of the cargo had to re-

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main on board of the *Alastor*. What ought to have been a magnificent freight was being gradually wasted in endless waiting.

One morning Johnnie, in sheer despair, accepted the invitation of a native chief to go hunting. Taking his Rigby rifle with him, it was not long before he had the satisfaction of bringing down a splendid stag with a fine shot, to the delight of the natives. The rest of the morning he spent in watching the latter hunt in their own fashion, and saw them spearing at least half a dozen deer.

The Batjanese appeared to Johnnie to be of an entirely different race to the effeminate Bandanese or Ambonese. They are a fine, sturdy race, much given to hunting, fishing, cock-fighting, or any other form of sport, and have a truly aboriginal abhorrence of any form of work whatsoever. When things get very dull, they amuse themselves by carrying off each other's wives, daughters and cattle, and it is said that the ensuing fighting is of the very best. These are the people whom the ex-colonel hoped to see smiting the earth with their foreheads whenever he did them the honour to pass that way!

At last, by dint of sending the ship's crew ashore to unload the lighters, the *Alastor* had landed all her Batjan cargo, her anchors were being catted, and she was steaming merrily out to sea, when Captain Bird made one of his rare appearances on the quarter-deck to inform Northwood he had just discovered that six of his sailors had gone ashore in the last boat and had deserted the ship. This was bad news indeed! Although several deserters had been captured and brought back by the police at Amboina and Banda, yet four men had managed to get clear away, and now there were six more missing! It would be impossible to work cargo with a short-handed crew in ports where there were no labour facilities. Besides, the ship's discipline was going to pieces, and very soon there would be no crew left.

There was nothing for it but to get possession of the

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deserters, and with a heavy heart Northwood ordered the *Alastor* back to her anchorage at Penamboeah. Immediately on arriving there, Johnnie went with Cornelius to see their sporting friend the chief, to whom the trouble was explained. "Would their elder brother catch these six sailors for a reward of ten dollars per head?"

The old chief grinned vigorously. The men of his tribe would hunt down the sailors and bring them on board in a very short time.

Surely enough, that afternoon a large prahu brought off the chief and some of his men guarding six dejected-looking sailors, whose hands were tied behind them. The party having come on deck, the sixty dollars were paid to the chief before the deserters, who were informed that this money would be docked from their wages, and that they would be severely punished next morning. The *Alastor* then headed out to sea once more.

The question of punishing the men now remained to be settled. It was obviously no punishment whatever to dock the wages of men who were determined to desert at the next chance. Cassim told Johnnie that his father would certainly have flogged the men. There were three bad characters on board who had deserted at every port, and who were making the crew discontented and mutinous. To flog these three men well and let off the rest was Cassim's advice, and Johnnie determined to act on it.

Naturally, Captain Bird objected to any such proceedings, and even McCracken, who knew something of Captain Northwood's ways, said it was a dangerous thing to attempt in a spot so far away from civilization. But Johnnie swore that he would flog the men with his own hand if necessary, but that flogged they should be. Bird said it did not greatly matter to him what happened, but that he threw the whole responsibility of the affair and all its consequences on Mr. Northwood's shoulders. Meanwhile, Cassim was left to settle various details, which he

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quite understood, as floggings had been by no means rare on board the *Samson* in the good old sailing-ship days.

Next morning the *Alastor's* crew was ranked on the upper deck. On the bridge stood Northwood, Bird and his two mates, McCracken and Van Papendrecht, it being as well that all the Europeans who could be got together should be present.

Cassim, after telling the deserters what he thought of them, and that he was only doing as "Capitan Nortood" would order, announced to the three ringleaders that they would get eighteen lashes apiece, but that the young *tuan* had been pleased to forgive the other three deserters, in the hope that they would remember his mercy. Cassim's mates thereupon stripped the three men to the waist, and made them fast to the rigging of the mainmast by their wrists. The instrument of punishment was a "colt," a short length of new one-inch rope, of which the end was served with twine and wax, and brought to a point—evidently a thing which could inflict severe punishment if desired. Cassim, taking up the "colt," administered a couple of sharp cuts with it to each of the culprits, passed it on to the tindal, who, after administering his two blows, passed it on to a sailor, then the "colt" was passed from hand to hand, so as to implicate as many as possible of the crew in the infliction of the punishment.

The men who were being flogged evidently suffered some pain, but nothing very acute, as the sailors obviously refrained from putting all their muscle into the lashes which they laid on to the backs of their comrades. However, after each of the deserters had had a dozen lashes, Cassim looked up to the bridge and got the expected signal from Johnnie Northwood to discontinue the flogging.

Then the unexpected happened. Standing on the deck was a queer and disreputable *protégé* of Captain Bird's, a lad from some Australian reformatory ship, named Jerry McGrath, whom Bird was trying to save from perdition. McGrath, a tremendously powerful lad, no sooner

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saw the signal from the bridge, than swearing with a vile oath that the deserters hadn't had half enough, he picked up the "colt" and began to lash into the bare backs of the men still made fast to the rigging with all his might. Blood spurted at every stroke, and there was yelling and confusion on every side. Bird and his two officers rushed down to the main deck, and after a violent struggle overcame the young ruffian and had him put into irons. The deserters were cast off and carried into the forecabin, bleeding and senseless. It was a sickening affair.

"This is a nice morning's work!" remarked Bird as he regained the bridge. "We shall hear more about it when we get to Singapore. I shall think myself lucky if I get off with six months in jail. What's going to happen if any of those wretched men die I don't like to think!"

"Don't you trouble about Singapore jail, captain!" said McCracken cheerily. "We'll all have our throats cut the night! None of us will ever see another sunrise! That's going to be the end of this business!"

So saying, McCracken tapped the butt of his revolver significantly and went to his cabin to make his will.

Van Papendrecht's opinion was that Jerry McGrath, instead of being in irons, ought to be rewarded. The "colt" in his hands was a terrible thing. Thanks to him, the men had been really flogged, and the whole crew given a lesson which was much wanted. Cornelius was in no wise alarmed, because he had fifty of his hunters on board, each armed with a gun.

Next morning the sun rose without any cutting of throats having taken place. Cassim reported that the men were cowed and much impressed by what had taken place, and that the three ringleaders who had been so severely flogged were now most humble and would give no further trouble.

As a matter of fact, the entire crew behaved very well indeed for the rest of the voyage, and all insubordination and deserting came to an end. Besides, Cassim was always

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telling them that the flogging was according to the law of "Capitan Nortood," which was a just and good law. Natives are soon impressed by any exhibition of either strength or weakness. None of the crew had any complaint to make to the Master Attendant when the ship finally returned to Singapore.

The *Alastor* arrived in due course at Manzanam, the first of her New Guinea ports, where the visit of a steamer was a great event. The scenery of the coast, destined to become very monotonous on the long run, offered no particular interest after a voyage through the Moluccas. The general impression is that of vast belts of sago-palms near the coast, consisting literally of millions of trees; of never-ending and impenetrable forests; while in the dim distance rise the crests of immense untrodden mountain ranges. The climate on the coast is hot, steamy, and depressing, and albeit Dutch New Guinea conceals incalculable riches of every kind, it is an uninviting country, whose treasures are guarded by so many dangers that it will be many a long year before even the boldest of men will make any serious attempt to rifle them. But, of course, the day will come when much which is seemingly impossible now will be achieved with comparative ease, and Dutch New Guinea will be forced to give up at least a portion of its amazing wealth. No doubt a splendid climate will be found amidst its towering mountain ranges, and much else besides. As British territory, the country might have a splendid future before it.

Political considerations did not happen to trouble Johnnie Northwood just then. He had met a few Papuans in the Moluccas, but here he saw them in the mass. It seemed astonishing that such fine, big, strapping men and women, with well-defined and bold features, could be so intensely idiotic. They were nearly, and sometimes absolutely, naked. The men's bodies were disfigured with the coarsest tattooing or hideous patterns burned on their skins with hot irons. Many had filed their teeth into points like

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those of sharks. The women, by dint of many years of hard and constant work, had succeeded in increasing the drums of wood inserted into the lobes of their ears to such a size and weight that their ears touched their shoulders. All wore a huge bush of coarse, black, crinkly hair, which they were constantly prodding with carved wooden prongs for an obvious purpose.

Some of their customs are unprintable, nor do the Papuans as a rule smell very sweet. The men walk about with one or more spears in their hands, made of ironwood, carved with infernal ingenuity at the upper end, and the hideous barbs practically draw out the inside of a man, if plunged into his body and withdrawn as the Papuans know how to do full well. A curious race, but quiet enough withal, until they get on the warpath.

Johnnie was hugely interested in the Dutch Mission at Manzanam, consisting of a solitary Dutch pastor and his wife, sent out to this wild place by some society in Holland. He did not particularly care about the pastor, a somewhat sanctimonious, unwashed, and unwholesome-looking person, with as keen an eye to the guilders as Shelby himself. His wife, on the other hand, was a bright, winsome person, who appeared to enjoy life in this desolate place in the company of her repellent husband and her two pretty children, born at Manzanam.

The missionaries belonging to this society are compelled to marry before they leave Holland, and should any one of them have the misfortune to lose his wife, another one is sent out to replace her without delay—the missionary must have a wife, whatever happens.

Cornelius told a story to the effect that one of these reverend gentlemen, having married a red-haired girl before leaving Holland, had the misfortune to lose her shortly after their arrival in New Guinea. The society in Holland sent him out another lady with a splendid head of the most radiant auburn hair. This poor thing also died, whereupon a third bride was shipped out to the bereaved

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patriarch. He went to Batavia to meet her, and on being introduced to his future wife by the captain of the mail steamer, he perceived, to his astonishment, that she was absolutely carroty! According to Cornelius, the reverend person's language on this occasion did him but little credit; but then it was not always wise to place implicit confidence in history as related by Cornelius van Papendrecht.

Johnnie bought some birdskins and curios from the missionary at prices which Cornelius declared were horribly dear. At the pastor's invitation our hero attended the service in the church on Sunday. The mission buildings were extensive and surrounded far and wide by carefully-tilled fields of native tobacco and other crops. The church, a very simple structure, was much larger than any other of the buildings, and astonished Johnnie by its size. Big as it was, it was crammed with Papuans; these savages really seemed to be an unexpectedly devout lot. After a short service, however, the padre took his place at the main door and as each aborigine filed out, he made up a sort of account with the missionary and was paid something. It seemed to be quite a new idea for the preacher to pay his congregation, though not half a bad one.

Investigation brought to light in due course that the worthy missionary, who farmed the fields and traded in many things, paid all his wages and accounts immediately after the service held each Sunday. People who did not go to church did not get paid. It was a simple but bright idea, which drew record congregations to the church in Manzanam. Doubtless many a pious soul in far-away Holland must have been comforted to learn of these poor Papuans attending divine service in such gratifying numbers at Manzanam.

Johnnie had not failed to supply the Mission with sundry creature comforts from his abundant stores of them, but when the *Alastor* was about to leave, he thought he would like to send the missionary's wife some little present which

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should be personal to herself and not merely something more likely than not to be gobbled up by her husband. He happened to come across a very prettily-decorated box of Parisian perfumes, which he had intended to give to Madame van Swoll, but had forgotten to do so. He thought that this elegant trifle might have its special charm for a pretty woman buried alive in Manzanam, so he sent it off to the Mission by Lapis.

Presently Lapis came back to the ship, with the packet still in his hand, which he returned to his master with the news that the "Mem Padre" was much obliged and sent many thanks for the present, which, however, she returned, as she would much rather have a case of beer instead of it!

Cornelius laughed heartily when he heard about this little affair and advised Johnnie to arrange matters so that next time he wanted to make a missionary's wife a present, her husband should know nothing about it. Of course the case of beer had necessarily to be sent to the Mission.

The *Alastor*, having loaded a quantity of pearl-shell, and some packets of valuable pearls locked up in the ship's safe, started on her long cruise in New Guinea waters.

Next morning Cornelius told Johnnie of rumours brought to him by the natives of Manzanam of fighting in the vicinity of Ansoes, whither they were bound. Cornelius supposed that it was the old story of the mountain tribes harrying and plundering the coast and wanting to burn his warehouses. If the mountaineers succeeded in their raid it was a serious matter, because if Van Papendrecht's trading-station had been destroyed, the *Alastor's* voyage of some two thousand miles or more would be almost or quite useless. Still Cornelius hoped for the best; his people were pretty well armed, and if Captain Murphy happened to be anywhere near the scene of action with his schooner, he could certainly make it very hot for the invaders. The *Amboina* mounted four guns and her crew were armed with Winchester repeating rifles.

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Johnnie's heart beat with the mere idea of getting into a fight. He and Cassim were busy with flannel and powder making their own cartridges for the *Alastor's* two brass guns, while there was a great overhauling of rifles and revolvers.

After a fine voyage through numbers of large islands, the *Alastor* arrived at Ansoes, the principal anchorage in the great island of Doreh, off the New Guinea coast. Van Papendrecht cast an anxious eye over the desolate scene. The remains of a couple of burned villages were prominent, but thank goodness! the great rough sheds in which were piled the *Alastor's* cargo were intact. Their voyage was not in vain.

Soon a whole flotilla of boats emerged from hidden creeks, and the *Alastor* was surrounded by a floating population of howling but friendly Papuans. It appeared that Captain Murphy turned up at Ansoes just at the critical moment, and running the *Amboina* close in shore, opened a tremendous fire on the enemy, which killed them in great numbers, and caused them to fly in the wildest confusion, closely pursued by their intended victims. Having landed what he had on board and seeing that all was safe at Ansoes, Captain Murphy, in a business-like way, had sailed along the coast for another cargo of gum copal, with which he might be expected back very shortly.

So far so good. Johnnie was disappointed at having arrived too late to see some fighting, but Cornelius was delighted with the turn of events. The mountain tribes had had a lesson which they would not forget for a long time. Moreover, in their desperate flight they had thrown away all their muskets and other weapons, so that it could reasonably be hoped that there would be peace in this wild region for an unusually prolonged period.

The "friendly" Papuans were, however, inclined to be insolent over their victory, and as they are a treacherous race, whose cupidity might be excited by the quantities of

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“trade” on board the *Alastor*, Van Papendrecht frequently warned Northwood and Bird of the danger of allowing too many of them on board at the same time. But the big, powerful fellows were all over the ship. They were as active as monkeys and swarmed up the rigging when Cassim and his sailors tried to chase them over the side. The situation was getting intolerable; the shouts and yells from the canoes alongside were deafening, while on deck a mob of Papuan sight-seers prevented any work from being done.

In a happy moment it occurred to Van Papendrecht to have the *Alastor's* guns fired over the boats alongside. The guns were already loaded, and the idea was carried into effect at once. The roar of the brass guns and the ominous whistling of the shot, which struck the water harmlessly enough at a distance from the ship, produced a magical effect. The hideous row made by the Papuans was instantly hushed, several of them jumped from the steamer into the sea, and then their canoes started in a mad, panic-stricken race for the shore. One of the *Alastor's* cutters was then put into the water, manned by an armed crew in charge of one of the ship's officers to act as a police boat. At last it was possible to get the cargo-boats alongside and to start work in earnest.

It was necessary to be careful with these Papuans, because sinister rumours were current in Ansoes about the fate of the captain and crew of the *Coredo*, a Dutch ship trading on the coast. Captain Murphy, arriving in the *Amboina*, was able to confirm beyond a doubt that the Dutch captain and his crew had been slaughtered to a man, and the ship looted and set on fire.

Northwood and Van Papendrecht thanked Murphy for his plucky and effective action at a critical moment. They presented him with a gold watch and chain, a first-class revolver, and a handsome amount in guilders. But Bird expressed the opinion that his brother captain “ought to be hung” instead of receiving rewards for his conduct!

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The business of the place being entirely in the hand of Van Papendrecht, his half-breed agent, and Captain Murphy, Northwood had practically nothing to do. Cornelius made up a crew of the best Papuans he could find, one or two of whom spoke some smattering of Malay, and with these strange companions, Johnnie went on shooting expeditions which enabled him to see something of the country. Lion inspired the natives with a very wholesome terror. They had never seen an animal like him before.

This silent, lifeless country made a deep impression on Johnnie's imagination, as he saw it from a Papuan canoe. Vast bays and illimitable expanses of the open sea beyond were succeeded in the course of the day by narrow, tortuous channels between an intricate network of islands. These waterways, overhung by huge trees, the branches of which met overhead, were exceedingly gloomy. Everywhere dense masses of forest, dark and repellent, formed a dominant feature of the scenery. The Papuans handled their craft with great skill, avoiding sunken rocks and trees and fighting boiling currents with a dexterity which excited the admiration of their passenger to no small degree. They were indefatigable at their paddles, and in smooth water shot their canoe along at an exhilarating speed.

Sometimes at a distance of two or three miles from the coast they would come across a huge, odd-looking structure, built on piles over a sunken reef, with great war-canoes and various smaller craft for fishing slung underneath it. This was the home of a Papuan community of many families, numbering, perhaps, some two or three hundred souls. It is the way adopted by the coast Papuan to defend himself against sudden attack by the hill tribes. Isolated by miles of water, it is impossible for the Papuans living in these queer quarters to be taken by surprise.

Presents of a few strings of beads and other cheap articles gave Johnnie an easy access to these marine homes,

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which proved to be most interesting. The different families were divided off from each other by walls of *attaps*, or leaves of the sago-palm stitched together by fibres. The whole arrangement of the sea-girt villages of the Papuans is orderly to an unexpected degree, and even indicates a certain amount of rough comfort. In the corridors of the building, Papuans, male and female, loafed about stark naked. The Malay sailors of the *Alastor* called Dutch New Guinea "*nəgri orang telanjang*" or "the country of the naked people." That such primitive people should be able to drive enormous hardwood piles into a sunken reef is a fact which only the extraordinary character of natives in general can explain.

As a sporting country Dutch New Guinea is one of the poorest in the world, as Johnnie found to his cost. It is strange that this vast island has no big game. Birds of the rarest beauty abound, but the nature of the country makes it exceedingly difficult to get at them.

On one occasion, Johnnie's Papuans landed him on a beach at the foot of a very steep cliff. Half the crew swarmed up the cliff like monkeys, but when Johnnie tried to follow them he found that no human being in boots could attempt the ascent with any degree of safety. In a very short time, however, the Papuans cut some sort of rattans in the forest, which they twisted into a rope with a loop at the end of it. Johnnie threw his long legs into this loop and was hauled up the face of the cliff by the Papuans. He got to the top all right, after a lot of rather painful scraping and bumping, but it was a foolhardy thing to undertake such a risk for no particular purpose. Still, he shot a few rare and beautiful birds on that day.

Next day he had a row with his Papuans. Feeling languid and played-out in the middle of the day, he ordered his men to take him back to the *Alastor* at once. To this the Papuans demurred; they had business of their own with a chief a few miles down the coast, and wished to go to see him first.

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Johnnie stormed out his orders and insisted on being obeyed, whereupon the Papuans hung about in knots, and finally, getting very insolent, began to talk about the *Coredo*, and to brandish their hideous spears. Johnnie saw that he was in a tight place. He had actually given his gun to one of the natives to carry, as it was a reeking hot day, so that he was unarmed. He saw his chance, however, and walking up to the biggest Papuan of the lot, he dealt him a smashing blow between the eyes, which he followed up with a rib-roaster which sent the sooty ruffian end over end. To his surprise the rest of the Papuans broke out into roars of laughter. They had never seen fighting before which knocked a man over without killing him, and the whole thing appealed strongly to their aboriginal sense of humour. Mulvaney's tactics, which consist of hitting your enemy "first and frequent" invariably lead to victory.

The vanquished Papuan, having picked himself up, refrained from joining in the general merriment, and seemed much concerned about the condition of various parts of himself, but the whole thing ended in a friendly way and Johnnie was put on board the *Alastor* without loss of time.

Here was a case in which a shot from either pistol or gun would have been fatal to the man who fired it, while it would have been equally dangerous not to have resented the insult offered by the treacherous Papuans. When Van Papendrecht heard of the affair, he promptly vetoed any more solitary shooting-trips, but promised to organize a grand *battue* of birds of paradise for Johnnie's especial benefit.

For the next day or two Johnnie loafed about Van Papendrecht's very primitive establishment on shore. Compared with Ansoes, Manzanam lingered delightfully in the memory as a centre of civilization; a gorgeous capital which boasted of the presence of no less than one white woman. Here, at Ansoes, all was steeped in the deepest depths of the blackest barbarism.

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It amused Johnnie to watch Cornelius sorting out the skins of birds of paradise with practised hands. He thought it a "mug's game," but therein he made a profound mistake. There are endless varieties of these birds, and there is money in the trade.

Sorting a pile of skins, Cornelius suddenly happened on a couple of beautifully stuffed birds, of a very elegant shape, with two splendid long tail-feathers. These bird-skins seemed to be a merely glossy black of a rather funereal appearance until Cornelius began mechanically to turn them round by the bit of cane stuffed between their beaks. Then, as the light caught the skins, they flashed out into the most glorious colours. An emerald gleamed in the head of the bird, a collar of rubies round its neck, while the long tail-feathers were simply dazzling.

"I've never seen anything like it before!" shouted Cornelius. "It's an entirely new variety! Do take one as a present from me, and I'll send the other to Paris to see what they think of it."

The history of these two specimens may as well be told at once. Cornelius sent his to Paris; Johnnie gave his to Mrs. Dashwood, who wanted it for her hat. Cornelius wrote to Johnnie, telling him that his black bird of paradise had been sold for two thousand five hundred francs, and suggesting that he had better post his specimen to Paris. Mrs. Dashwood, on hearing of this, said to Johnnie very icily: "Oh, indeed! Then I must send you back your bird. I had no idea I was accepting such a valuable present. Let me see! that's about one hundred pounds, isn't it?"

The foolish young man implored her not to hurt his feelings, and wreck his future happiness over a birdskin. The lady relented, and next day took the bird out of her hat, smoothed it out nicely with her pretty hands, and sent it to a certain address in London. What she got for her black bird of paradise is her own innocent secret.

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Cornelius got his great hunting-party together, numbering nearly a hundred guns. Captain Bird, who had not yet been ashore, desired to join it, so he was given a nice twelve-bore and an abundant supply of cartridges, and told that he had better accompany the expedition in one of the ship's boats. The whole party moved off in excellent order and in the highest spirits.

They were after the common or yellow bird of paradise, a gregarious variety, which flies about in large bands. During the daytime these beautiful birds skim about the lofty tree-tops well out of gunshot, but towards sundown they get sleepy, and invariably roost on the lower branches of the trees, when they fall an easy prey to the Papuan hunters, who, like the birds themselves, go about in bands. Of course, the object of the hunters is to bring down as many as possible of these shy birds at the first volley.

After the expedition had been under way for something like four hours, a shout from Duivensbode's canoe directed Johnnie's attention to a great pack of the birds in the distance; there appeared to be some hundreds of them. To follow that fluttering golden cloud for the rest of the day was the exciting task of the expedition. Towards sundown they were seen wheeling round the tops of some lofty trees on a small island, on which they evidently intended to settle for the night. As each boat reached the shore, Cornelius, who had landed first, gave all the hunters clear instructions and had them all carefully posted. He was to give the signal to fire with his own gun. He made a sign to Johnnie to follow him.

As they went silently through the forest, Johnnie noticed what he had already seen several times in his expeditions—a neat pyramid of human skulls piled about four feet high, the topmost skull of the lot grinning from a cheap soup-plate, and forming a pretty finish to the whole affair. Somehow this dismal monument affected Johnnie very disagreeably on this occasion. The skull in the soup-plate—probably that of some departed chief—seemed to

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grin at them in a nasty way, which boded no good to the expedition.

In the meantime the hunters had all been posted. Captain Bird's boat alone had not arrived; it had last been seen a mere white speck in the distance. Perhaps the captain had taken a heavy boat, or his Malay sailors had got fagged. Anyhow, it was decided to proceed without the skipper, so he was dropped out of their calculations, though this proved to be a grievous mistake. How such a careful general as Cornelius could overlook an important factor in the fortunes of the day, it is hard to say.

Ah! those fidgety, restless, beautiful devils of birds! It really seemed as if they would *never* settle down. They went whirling about perpetually, as if they knew that silent and deadly enemies lay in wait for them in the dark forest glades. More than one Papuan crept stealthily to Cornelius to tell him that further away a large number of birds were surrounded at an easy range; but their leader wanted to make a big bag, and refused permission for anyone to fire until he gave the signal. Time sped on; the birds were getting quieter and dancing about a good deal less. In reply to an inquiring look from Johnnie, Cornelius consulted his watch and whispered: "I'll just give them two minutes more, and then I'll open fire."

Just at that precise moment a couple of shots rang out on the other side of the island, followed in rapid succession by two other shots, so that evidently someone was at work with a breechloader. In a moment all was confusion, and there was a sort of golden whirl as the frightened birds disappeared through the lofty tree-tops into the sky beyond.

"Fire!" shouted Van Papendrecht, as he pressed his trigger. Johnnie was fortunate enough to bring down a couple of the birds with a right and left. There was a spluttering fire from the Papuans, which did very little execution, and the thing was over.

Van Papendrecht, perfectly yellow with rage, rushed

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over to the other side of the island, where he beheld Captain Bird comfortably seated in his boat, from which he had been bombarding the birds of paradise at a range of well over two hundred yards.

"Hello!" shouted the captain. "I must have knocked over a rare lot of them!"

Poor Cornelius used some sad words in Dutch and other foreign languages and disappeared. A force of considerably over a hundred men had been out all day to get exactly nine birds of paradise. Nine skins!

The return to the *Alastor* was a tedious affair. Cornelius was in an execrable humour, the men were sulky and tired, and it was late at night before the ship was reached.

The next day the *Alastor* left Ansoes with a cargo on board of considerable value, and anchored off the island of Waigiou. The King of Waigiou came off to the ship in his state prahu, with flags flying and drums beating merrily. His Highness was a very genial monarch indeed, who got exceedingly drunk during quite a short visit.

To the astonishment of all on board, there was a good-looking young Englishman in the king's train. He told Johnnie that his name was Paterson, that he had escaped from the wreck of a pearling schooner, and had lived for about three years in Waigiou without seeing a single white man during that time. Although Paterson was dressed in native clothing, it was evident that he was a man of education and refinement. Johnnie naturally offered him a passage to Singapore, which was greedily accepted.

'Twas whisky which brought about the downfall of His Majesty of Waigiou. The King, who had hitherto believed that gin was the sublimest drink on earth, was fated to taste whisky for the first time in his life! Johnnie offered Paterson a whisky and soda. No sooner was the tray brought on deck, than the King walked up to it, and with a sort of royal instinct seized the bottle of old Glenlivet by the neck and poured himself out a tumbler

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of the neat spirit, which he immediately drank to the last drop. Then with a beaming smile he started to refill his glass.

The King being carried off to his prahu by his faithful courtiers—who were nearly dead with sheer envy of him—Johnnie, Cornelius and Paterson went ashore in one of the ship's boats.

Waigiou appeared a pretty and agreeable place after Ansoes. The people were of the soft and pleasant Ambonese type, living in comfortable villages. The island possesses natural wealth of various kinds, and no doubt a trade could be organized.

The next morning Johnnie went to pay the King his farewell visit. By special request a case of whisky had been added to the other gifts offered. After a very cordial interview, Johnnie returned to the shore, where he saw a number of men bearing something which looked very much like a human body on their shoulders. To his surprise, it was put into his boat, and proved to be a very fine young woman sent to Johnnie by a grateful monarch.

Paterson said it would never do to send the girl back, as it would constitute a deadly insult, and very likely end in her being put to death. It might be arranged, so Paterson thought, to land her at Salawatti next day.

So there was nothing for it but to take the young woman on board. Paterson told the necessary lies about Johnnie's gratitude for the King's most acceptable gift and the boat shoved off. It was a real treat to watch the expression of Captain Bird's face as he saw his owner bringing a handsome native woman on board with him. Of course, to his charitable mind there was only one possible construction of such a phenomenon. The girl was lodged in a deck cabin, near which no one could go without being observed, and she was placed under the special protection of the faithful Cassim.

Next day Salawatti was reached, a fine island, having the general characteristics of Waigiou. The Sultan of

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Salawatti was, however, much more dignified and less sociable than his brother of Waigiou. He received Johnnie and his gifts, however, which included the young woman, whom Paterson guaranteed was unmated, with much gratification. The gift of a girl seems to be considered a very delicate attention in the best society at Salawatti, and Johnnie at once passed for a person of considerable distinction. The girl herself, who seemed delighted to find herself on dry land again, expressed herself as being quite contented with the arrangement. It was difficult to do anything else with her.

After a short visit the *Alastor* sailed from Salawatti, and the expedition seemed to have left its luck behind it in that remote island; for nothing went right from that moment. Barely had the steamer got under way when Johnnie thought Cornelius looked very queer and told him so.

"Fever!" said the Dutchman. "Diet and quinine! Better take your own temperature!" and so saying, he handed Johnnie a clinical thermometer, who was very much disgusted to find that he was in a high fever. Even poor Lion was down with fever, as the dog's languidness and his staring coat testified. Captain Bird and everybody else on board were all right, but they had not been continually on shore like Johnnie, Cornelius and Lion. So the sick ones starved themselves and swallowed quinine, feeling unhappy and miserable all the time.

One fine day the *Alastor* was bowling through the Pitt's Straits under a full head of steam and all sail set, when suddenly the sun went yellow, a sickly glare spread over the sky, the smooth sea seethed with white foam, the ship reeled and trembled, and there was a horrid feeling as though she was being sucked down in some mysterious and irresistible way. Aloft all was confusion, sails and spars, ropes and blocks were flying about in all directions. Luckily the *Alastor* carried a big crew, or it would have been the end of her. Barely had she had the canvas

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taken off her, when the sky went black, the wind blew heavens hard, and a tremendous sea started running.

"What is this!" cried the fever-stricken Cornelius, as he slid out of his long chair and staggered across the reeling deck. "I say, Northwood, I can't stand it! I'm going to my cabin."

Johnnie also started for his spacious cabin, whither he was followed by Lion. Undressing himself (for he was soaked with sea-water), he rolled into his bed and got Lapis to pile all the blankets he could find on top of him. The fever had now got a good grip of the young fellow. He could hear in a dim sort of way the washing of sweeping seas over the decks, and the shrill shriek of the hurricane, but to him it mattered very little. Shivering beneath his blankets, it was all one to him what became of the *Alastor*. He dozed feverishly for about thirty miserable hours, when his skin got a little moister, and he aroused himself from the lethargy which oppressed him.

Totally unconscious of the lapse of time, Johnnie pulled himself together and determined to find out what was taking place. The violent jerking motions of the ship, the racing of the propeller constantly flung into the air, and various other phenomena, indicated that the force of the hurricane had not abated in the slightest degree. Getting into his warmest clothing and oilskins and sou'wester, he got on deck and struggled on to the bridge, where he found Bird and Cassim taking the *Alastor* into the teeth of the storm.

Haggard, weary, and with bloodshot eyes, these two brave men stuck sleeplessly to their post. For that matter, the officers and crew of the *Alastor* were coming splendidly out of a very cruel test.

"She is doing magnificently!" shouted Captain Bird. "I have never seen a finer sea-boat than the *Alastor*. We shall get to Banda all right if our coals hold out. You see that little black lump on the horizon? That's Banda!"

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Johnnie thanked the captain as best he could, but feeling deadly ill, he crawled back to his cabin.

No attempt was made to cook anything on board of the *Alastor* in such circumstances, but Lapis managed to warm a tin of soup over a spirit-lamp, and to get his master to take some of it in a cup, the only food he had tasted during forty-eight hours. Fortified to this extent, Johnnie once more struggled on to the bridge and found that the time was about six p.m. To his dismay the little round lump in the far distance, which was Banda, was hardly any larger than it was in the morning. Captain Bird explained hoarsely to him that the *Alastor* was making barely a knot an hour in the face of a hurricane such as seldom swept the seas.

A mile an hour! thought Johnnie to himself. When shall we ever get to Banda? Then he felt sick and dizzy, and had to be taken to his cabin by a couple of sailors.

Next morning Lapis roused him with the glad news that they were steaming into their anchorage at Banda. Johnnie felt that the vessel was still knocking about most fearfully, and that the weather had not abated. Still the thought that he might actually be on shore within an hour or two, that he might get medical advice, and perhaps sleep in a clean, sweet, big room on dry land that night, braced him up and gave him new life.

When he got on deck, however, he found the wind still blowing very hard indeed. Captain Bird had anchored the *Alastor* fore and aft. He had made fast with a good hawser to a half-buried cannon on shore, and the ship's life-boat was painfully towing a stout manila cable to a little islet on her starboard side, where it was made fast round the trunk of a great tree. Moreover, Captain Bird was keeping up a good head of steam in case of emergencies. A glance on shore revealed the reason for these precautions. The custom-house buildings were unroofed and nearly up to their window-sills in water. Trees were

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uprooted, and the main street of Banda looked like a muddy torrent streaming into the sea. Such a spectacle of desolation can hardly be conceived.

Johnnie found Paterson coolly munching some bread and cheese as he walked briskly up and down the quarter-deck. He said that he was not going on shore.

Going below for a minute, Johnnie had a brief interview with Cornelius, who, quaking with fever under his blankets, begged as an especial favour that he might be allowed to die in peace.

Johnnie got on shore somehow, and started to ford his lonely way against the current, which nearly took him off his legs. Finally, he discovered Blankert's house, which was only partially unroofed. He found Blankert wading about in his office, collecting books and papers with the assistance of some natives and transporting them to the only dry corner left to him.

On perceiving Johnnie, Blankert started as if he had seen a ghost, and shrieked: "What are you doing in Banda? Why have you come to this cursed place? Go away! Take my advice and go away at once!"

Calming down a bit, he told Johnnie that business in Banda was sheer nonsense. Dragging him to the door, he showed him the peak of Gunong Api, standing out clear and black against an angry sky, without the slightest film of vapour or smoke to veil its sharp outlines. That meant mischief!

"Go on board your ship at once and get away without losing a moment! That is good advice! Stay, I will go with you!"

The plucky Dutchman seized Johnnie by the arm, and the pair of them started down the torrent which swept the street, on their way to the *Alastor*. The wind was behind their backs, and they found great difficulty in keeping their feet. Barely had they left the house, when several sheets of corrugated iron whirled high over their heads like so many bits of paper.

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"Another nutmeg-godown unroofed and another valuable stock ruined!" groaned Blankert.

Johnnie looked at the dripping Dutchman, and said, with a wan smile: "Well! you *are* a proper wet Blankert this time, aren't you?"

"Ha! what is that you say?" bawled Blankert, who had just heard his name and no more. Then Johnnie suddenly remembered that it is not seemly to joke with Dutchmen.

As they made their way down the flooded street, they had a full view of the *Alastor* blowing off steam before them all the time. Suddenly a tremendous rush of wind caught the two men. Johnnie, weakened by fever and want of nourishment, could not withstand its violent pressure, and with a cry fell headlong into the turbid, raging stream. But for Blankert's timely aid the lad would have been drowned surely enough. However, the gust having passed, Blankert got him on his feet again. But when the pair started to resume their painful journey, they found to their horror that the *Alastor* had disappeared. Chain cables and manila ropes had snapped like pack-threads and the vessel swept out to sea!

Under the spur of excitement the two men, followed by some natives, got to the end of the street, from which they could see the *Alastor* steaming out to sea and apparently well under control. Had Captain Bird not kept up a full head of steam the vessel would have been a wreck in five minutes, or even less.

Then a strange sight met the gaze of the two men. They suddenly saw the Dutch quarterly mail-boat—a steamer much larger and more powerful than the *Alastor*—trying to get in to her usual berth. All seemed going well with the big Dutch boat until her captain, apparently nervous in such awful weather about taking his ship inside the reefs and the small island already mentioned, altered his course so as to pass outside of these dangers. At least, so it seemed to the watchers from the shore.

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There was another terrific roar of wind, a white smother out at sea, some shrieks heard faintly through the storm, and the Dutch steamer was gone! The spectators looked at each other in sheer horror. Was it a reality that they had witnessed this catastrophe? Surely not! But a few minutes afterwards the sea cast up almost at their feet some wreckage, to which clung three wretched native sailors, the sole survivors of the mail-boat *Batavia*. Captain, officers, crew and passengers had all gone to their doom in a few seconds, save these three shivering wretches.

Sick at heart, Johnnie and Blankert took refuge in the upper floor of the unroofed custom-house. Here, at least, they were not up to their knees in water, while the walls offered some protection from the wind. To Johnnie the position was serious enough. He felt that he no longer possessed sufficient strength to force his way up that fearful street again. He could barely stand upright, and his weakness was fast increasing. What could poor Blankert do for him in any event?

The position seemed hopeless. Johnnie felt that a few hours more of this exposure would kill him, and from this issue there appeared to be no escape. So he crouched in a corner of the unroofed house to wait for the end.

Suddenly the natives below rushed up with the news that the *Alastor* was returning.

"Surely not," gasped Blankert. "Why, your captain must be mad! He has lost all his anchors and the storm is worse than ever. He will lose his ship also! Two fine ships gone in one afternoon at Banda!"

Johnnie shivered, his brain was numbed, a cloud was before his eyes. It seemed to him that Death was very near. But in a few seconds the cloud passed away, the brain worked once more, and the sick lad made a last rally.

"Listen, Blankert! I expect Captain Bird is risking everything to take me off the island. I am nearly dead

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with fever, but I want to save the ship. Get the natives to man a prahu, and offer them one thousand, two thousand guilders, or anything they want if they will put me on board the *Alastor* before she gets inside the dangers."

"Yes," said the tough little Dutchman. "That is a good idea! Better pay them a lot than lose the steamer and all on board!"

Tempted by a sum which to them was enormous, a party of native boatmen offered to make an attempt to board. Johnnie was roused and taken to a sheltered creek near at hand, where, saying good-bye to the brave and excellent Blankert, he got on board a large canoe manned by a strong crew. Once out of the creek the canoe went flying out to sea before the storm. She was practically unsinkable and the natives handled her very well. Presently it was evident that the *Alastor's* people understood what was being attempted, for the steamer was kept hove to, outside the dangers. The canoe was rapidly approaching the steamer; with remarkable skill and courage the natives went straight for the ship.

Johnnie suddenly saw the *Alastor's* deck beneath him as she rolled in the trough of the sea and the canoe rose on the crest of a wave.

"Jump!" yelled the natives. "Quick!"

Johnnie made a spring, just grasped the rail of the *Alastor*, and was dragged on board barely in the nick of time by Cassim and a couple of sailors.

"All right, Mr. Northwood?" shouted Captain Bird from the bridge.

"Yes! Many thanks! Amboina!"

"All right, sir! Amboina!"

It was no moment for talking. Johnnie had no idea his cabin could look such a heavenly place. It was actually dry, and a dry spot seemed to him the finest possession of a human being. He took some more tinned soup, a big dose of quinine, and got beneath his blankets once more.

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It can be imagined what a blessed relief it was to the sorely tried people of the *Alastor* when she at last steamed up the sheltered waters of Amboina harbour and was in safety.

Shelby, who had been very anxious about the fate of the *Alastor*, lost no time in getting on board of her. He was shocked at the cadaverous look of young Northwood. He had him put into a carriage and drove off home with him. Once he was in Shelby's house and in bed, the worthy old doctor from the regiment said our hero was very ill indeed. However, thanks to the excellent nursing of Mrs. Shelby and her servants, he rallied with great rapidity, but was still exceedingly weak.

Van Papendrecht declared that he was too ill to continue his journey and would stay in Amboina until he was fit to travel. The doctor and all his friends urged Johnnie to let the *Alastor* sail without him. But he would hear of no such thing.

Meanwhile, Paterson puzzled Shelby to no small degree. Shelby, who found him very much at home on the quarter-deck of the *Alastor*, looking very nice and cool in Northwood's clothes, which fitted him remarkably well, put Paterson through a regular cross-examination, but could make nothing of him. He got suspicious of a man who would say nothing of himself except that he had been wrecked in a pearling schooner and knew nothing of what had become of the rest of the crew.

"It's a very fishy story," said Shelby, "and if I were you I'd carry the fellow no further unless he tells you who and what he is! He's shipped under a fancy name, any way. He ain't Paterson any more than I am! That fellow is up to mischief and you had better get quit of him!"

Neither Shelby nor Northwood ever penetrated the mystery of a man so strangely picked up in a remote island. Always polite, the so-called Paterson was always on his guard. It was impossible to extract anything from

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one of such impenetrable reserve. He maintained his usual cool attitude until the *Alastor* reached Singapore, when he requested Northwood to lend him a couple of hundred dollars to cable to his friends for a remittance. Very much doubting whether he should see his money again, Johnnie let him have it. Paterson thereupon thanked him in a formal, almost perfunctory, way, and went on shore. The remittance must have been cabled all right, for a couple of days afterwards a hotel messenger brought two hundred dollars to Northwood's office, and asked for a receipt on behalf of Mr. Paterson for the money.

Captain Northwood called at the hotel to see this remarkable person, but was told to his amazement that Mr. Paterson was staying at Government House! Now Government House was *not* notorious for its hospitality. Very few people indeed were invited actually to live in the Governor's palace for twenty-four hours—perhaps half a dozen favoured individuals in the course of a century. Who, then, was this "Paterson" that he should be distinguished in this way? Of course, His Excellency must have known who he was before he invited him! Mrs. Northwood was not the only lady in Singapore who was weaving romances about the mysterious stranger rescued by Johnnie and by him brought back to civilization and Government House.

Whoever "Paterson" was, gratitude was *not* his besetting sin. He paid back the money he had borrowed, but some thanks off the ice-chest was all that Johnnie got for bringing the Governor's guest all the way from Waigiou. "Paterson" sailed by the next P. and O. mail and Johnnie never heard of him again.

The man was one of the many phenomenal people who pass through Singapore, and give its inhabitants food for reflection if nothing else. But he was quite a harmless specimen of the kind compared to some.

The *Alastor*, having loaded her Amboina cargo, was on

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the point of sailing for Ternate. Every effort was made to induce Northwood to stay in Amboina, but in vain! Shelby told him, as they were driving to the steamer, that he was going right into the volcanic region once more, and might get into worse trouble than he had already experienced at Banda. That Gunong Api showed up clear during a cyclone was a very bad sign, in Shelby's opinion, and meant trouble somewhere; perhaps not in Banda itself, but in some other region of the volcanic belt. Unfortunately, Shelby, with his intimate knowledge of these waters, proved to be perfectly correct in what he said.

The weather was a bit squally as the *Alastor* steamed out of Amboina harbour, but that was all. Next morning, however, Captain Bird was looking very anxious. The barometer confirmed Shelby's forebodings, and the sea was running higher with every hour on the voyage to Ternate.

Presently a red glare flamed on the black sky—it was Ternate in eruption. Just then the chief officer came to see that the rudder and rudder chains were all secure, and took the opportunity to say to Johnnie: "It looks to me, sir, as if Banda was a mere joke compared to what we're in for now! What do you think of running for shelter on the other side of Tidore, or amongst some of the islands?"

"That's a matter for Captain Bird to decide! He can do exactly what he likes."

"Well, the captain says the end of the world has come, and I'm thinking that it looks a bit like it!"

So saying, the young sailor, having finished his round of inspection, went forward to report to the captain that the steering-gear was all right.

Captain Bird, bearing Shelby's warnings in mind, had sent down all his topmasts and spars while there was still time to do so, and the *Alastor* went steaming through the storm under bare poles. The ship was fast nearing Ternate.

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The sky was like black marble veined with a fiery network of lightning flashes. Vast columns of flame roared at the summit of the volcano, a gleaming river of molten lava flowed from the crater through blazing forests and plantations, until it ended its course in the sea amidst stupendous clouds of steam. The sounds of the storm were dominated by the awful roar of the volcano. The sea was rolling in huge never-ending waves of flame and blood. As Johnnie looked shorewards he saw a couple of buildings totter and come crashing to the ground amidst clouds of dust. Ternate was being racked by an earthquake.

Spellbound by this tremendous scene, Johnnie, despite his strong nerves, began to give way to a dread apprehension of something worse than destruction in an awful form, of things supernatural and unholy.

Suddenly the fury of the elements redoubled, the lightning flashes filled the air with sheets of flame which never ceased. Sky, sea and land were all enwrapped in fire. The *Alastor* seemed to have sailed into a flaming hell.

Just then Johnnie thought he felt a slight shock forward, and Captain Bird came racing along the deck, shouting: "We've sunk a large prahu! Look!"

Surely enough, some wreckage swirled by the rail of the ship. Just then the violence of the storm flung her forefoot high in the air as the stern dipped deep into the trough of the sea, her propeller seemed to churn up something, and the body of a woman came to the surface with her arms extended and her long brown hair floating round her face. A long flash of white flame lit up the woman's body as the wave bore it upwards. With a wild shriek of "*Coralie!*" Johnnie made a tremendous effort to seize the woman, for she appeared to be almost within his grasp! But a wave struck the ship's counter and all but washed him overboard. He was half over the taffrail when Captain Bird managed to rescue him.

Once more in that strangely illuminated sea Johnnie

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saw Coralie van Swoll on the crest of a wave almost as if she were reposing upon it, and one of her naked arms moved as if she were beckoning to him !

“ That woman lost her life trying to get on board this ship to meet you ! ” thundered Captain Bird. Then in a maniacal fit he shouted that the End of the World was come ; the Day of Doom and Damnation for harlots and their lovers, for monopolists and bloodsuckers ! With a waxen face and blazing, bloodshot eyes, the Captain screamed out a string of the most awful curses devised by human malignity.

Another huge wave rolled over the stern of the *Alastor*. Captain Bird, still apostrophizing the blazing heavens with uplifted hands, was caught and lifted off his feet by the surge of the sea, and in a few brief seconds he would have been overboard, but for Johnnie's rapid clutch at him. After a desperate struggle, they both retained their foothold on the narrow deck, which was awash with the raging seas around them. The shock seemed partially to recall Captain Bird to his senses. “ You saved my life that time. It's quits ! ” he cried. Then the racing seas swirling through great jagged rocks, suddenly threw a new light upon his disordered mind. “ My God ! ” he yelled. “ We're right in amongst the reefs ! It will be all over in two or three minutes ! ”

But the sailor instinct had got the upper hand of his fanaticism. He sped off to the bridge to make a final endeavour to save the *Alastor*. For the moment, he forgot about the End of the World. It was his duty to keep his ship off the deadly reefs surrounding him, and his distracted mind whirled round to that paramount idea.

Meanwhile Johnnie, left alone on the quarter-deck, beheld with dismay the stern of the *Alastor* shaving by a few inches great masses of what seemed to be incandescent rocks lashed by fiery foam. Whether it was day or night, he did not know. It did not matter in those infernal regions !

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Suddenly the *Alastor* struck on the tail of a reef with a horrid, grinding shock. The ship quivered and shook on her rocky bed. It seemed as if she would go to pieces at any moment. The wind, which had shifted to every point of the compass, came down with hurricane force on the *Alastor's* port side and swept her off the reef. Her thick iron plates and frames had enabled the old steamer to withstand a shock which would have crumpled up a modern steel vessel like an eggshell.

From that time the *Alastor* raced her way through a boiling torrent of rocks under water, but in the end Captain Bird got her through the dangers which menaced her on every side. The madman had piloted the ship through perils which would in all probability have ended her existence had a cool and calculating skipper been on the bridge during that wild dash through the reefs.

Johnnie Northwood realized that the *Alastor* was now in comparative safety in the open sea. He felt chilled to the heart; he had been tested so cruelly, he was so broken down physically and morally, that his one desire was to crawl away to some corner where he might die in peace.

With aching eyes he once more surveyed the flaming scene that he was leaving behind him. Then somehow he reached his cabin and, soaking wet as he was, he got into his berth. Sleep was out of the question. His fevered imagination glowed with all sorts of horrors. Could he have rescued Coralie with a greater effort than that which he had exerted? Was Coralie alive or dead when he last saw her floating on the crest of a crimson wave under the glare of a livid sheet of lightning? Was it true that she lost her life in attempting to get on board the *Alastor*?

Finally he went off into a sort of dull torpor, in the midst of which he was conscious at times that Lapis brought him medicine or soup. Then his cabin-door

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was flung open and he heard McCracken's rough voice saying: "Come, Mr. Northwood, rouse a bit! We've got into lovely weather. It'll do you good to get on deck!"

So with some trouble he got on deck, to find the *Alastor* steaming through tranquil and sunlit seas. How strange it seemed!

Johnnie spent most of his time in a long chair on the quarter-deck, dreaming dreams. Sometimes he could picture the Sea Gardens of Banda, and very often a certain moonlit colonnade at Ternate. Other visions would bring tears to his eyes or distort his wasted face with an expression of agony.

These dreams were sapping his strength and killing him as surely as the malarial fever from which he was suffering. Even to the indifferent eyes of the people on board, it was evident that he was rapidly getting weaker and could not last very much longer. He overheard the chief officer saying to somebody: "The skipper says that the end of the Owner is near at hand, thank God! That young brute will never see Singapore again. He's a damned scoundrel, anyway!"

Johnnie had always been particularly amiable with the chief officer, who drew excellent wages and had a very comfortable billet of it. Why should this man exult in his death? While he was trying to solve this question he fell asleep in his chair from sheer weariness.

At last he got too weak to leave his cabin. But he reached Singapore after all. One fine morning Lapis came into his master's cabin with the great news that Singapore was in sight.

With a great effort he dressed himself and got on deck. From his long chair he could see with pleasure, and even some sort of hope, the familiar features of the harbour. There was Fort Canning, and St. Andrew's Cathedral, and the Obelisk—Yes! and who were in that boat coming alongside?

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Barely had the *Alastor* dropped her anchor than Captain and Mrs. Northwood came on board to meet their son. He was carried very carefully and lovingly into the boat by his father and mother—no very heavy task, so utterly wasted away was he.

Thus ended Johnnie Northwood's First Expedition!

CHAPTER XV

THE FIRM OF NORTHWOOD AND SON

IT seemed very sweet to Johnnie Northwood to find himself once more in his beautiful, cool rooms in the old house surrounded by trees, lawns, and flowers, to see his father again, and to be nursed back to life by his mother. Dr. Macleod shook his head over the lad's condition, but said that he would pull him through all right. Fever was not the only mischief in this case. A severe attack of dysentery supervened, and a trouble was set up which in due time necessitated a very painful operation. It is the after-consequences of these terrible fevers which are the most to be dreaded.

Johnnie had good reason to know that explorations in dangerous countries are not to be undertaken without very serious risks.

However, he regained a measure of strength with astonishing rapidity. When he was well enough to hear anything about business, he learned that things were not going well at Battery Road. Busoni was capable and zealous, but he seemed to have no luck. True, he was doing a huge business in sago-flour, but the British Sugar Company cut prices so fine that there was no profit in the business, while certain arbitrations as to the quality of the sago held in London, resulted in heavy damages against the shippers being awarded, representing serious losses, which were wholly unforeseen. Busoni thought the awards quite unjustifiable, but that in no way altered the position of affairs. London brokers appeared to be remarkably

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smart in getting up claims and enforcing their payment, and that was all that could be said about it.

The sensible thing would have been to give up the whole sago-flour trade there and then; but this involved such a radical alteration of their whole business system, that it was resolved to keep things going in order to see if nothing could be done to save the situation.

The Marseilles business was doing badly also, and leaving more losses than profits. The Borneo trade, however, was never better, and the Moluccas venture was showing splendid results on paper. Taken all round, the position need not inspire any actual anxiety.

Meanwhile, Northwood senior had trouble enough on his hands in other directions. Captain Bird sent in his resignation on the day of his arrival, refused the gratuity offered to him, on account of the exceptional difficulties experienced by him during his command of the *Alastor*, and went about denouncing the Northwoods in the bitterest terms to all who would listen to him.

New arrangements had to be made. Captain John Fletcher remained in command of the *Brunei*. His brother James, who had come out to Singapore "on spec," was appointed to the *Alastor*. Then Mr. John Brown, the chief engineer of the *Brunei* wanted to leave in order to join a small iron foundry business in Singapore, in which the sagacious Scotsman detected fine possibilities, and urged Captain Northwood to lend him five thousand dollars with which to buy a share of the business. The Captain, who had every confidence in Brown, and was much vexed at the idea of losing him, promised to lend him the money, if he would serve until his younger brother Robert, came out from home to relieve him. So, after a lot of worry, everything was got into working order again.

When Johnnie was well enough to go to the office in Battery Road, one of his first tasks was to consider his financial position. Busoni required large sums of money from time to time, and these the banks refused to advance

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unless Captain Northwood guaranteed the re-payment of the loans. This was a system which had its inconveniences and for which Captain Northwood had a strong dislike. One of the bank managers now pointed out to Johnnie that he and his father worked hand in hand to such an extent that they practically represented one interest. Why not make a partnership of it? Then the firm would have all the credit it wanted. The idea seemed to be a good one—at least, so the Northwoods thought—and forthwith lawyers and accountants were set to work on the formation of the new firm. Two accountants, one of whom belonged to their bankers, certified that Captain Northwood, after writing down all his properties to the lowest value, and making full provision for depreciation of steamers, bad debts, and losses, was worth four hundred and ninety-eight thousand dollars—a sum equal at the exchange of the day to more than eighty-five thousand pounds sterling. This was an ample capital, and nothing but ordinary prudence was required to secure a very handsome return on it.

In due course a short, business-like circular advised those whom it might interest that Captain John Dillon Northwood and his son John Dillon Northwood had entered into partnership, and that their business as ship-owners and merchants would henceforth be conducted by the firm of Northwood and Son.

CHAPTER XVI

A LITTLE "CORNER" IN SAGO-FLOUR

AS most readers know, a "corner" is an attempt to control the entire supplies of any one article.

There is nothing finer than a "corner" when it succeeds, which is not very often; otherwise it ends in a very bad spill indeed.

Northwood had sold very considerable lots of Brunei and Labuan sago-flour to Mr. Lewis Wallis, of the firm of Morison, Wallis and Co. This was a very old-established firm. Morison had dissolved partnership many years before, and established himself as Morison and Co. in various ports of Java, with wonderful success. The Singapore business was left to Wallis. The firm was now managed by Wallis the Second, the son of the founder of the joint house.

Wallis sent all his sago-flour to Liverpool, so that his trade did not in any way clash with Northwoods'. In the end a business friendship sprang up between the two men, in spite of the great difference between their ages; for Wallis was an elderly man, whose hair was silvery white.

Northwood was seriously thinking of getting out of the sago-flour business altogether, when the Chinese traders came to him with long faces, complaining that the Singapore Chamber of Commerce had suddenly cut down the price of the gunnybags, in which sago is packed, by one half—from thirty to fifteen cents. No doubt thirty cents was an exorbitant charge for a sack, and the Chamber

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was quite right in cutting down the old rate, which had been suffered far too long; but the Chinese felt that they had been defrauded of a profit which they had enjoyed so long that they could not do without it.

Northwood had declined to join the Chamber of Commerce and did not see how he could help his Chinese friends in any way, until Lewis Wallis came forward with his plan. Briefly, the scheme of the elder man was to take advantage of the acute discontent of the Chinese traders to "corner" the market. If Morison, Wallis and Co. and Northwood and Son combined to offer the Chinese the old rate of thirty cents per sack in defiance of the Chamber of Commerce, it would be an easy matter in the present state of the market to contract for all the visible supplies for the next twelve months, and then to move up prices far in excess of the fifteen cents extra for the cost of the mere sack, which did not amount to so very much after all. The thing was to profit by the exasperation of the Chinese to run a monopoly of this staple.

Morison, Wallis and Co. were members of the Chamber of Commerce, but Lewis Wallis said he had voted against the reduction, and that he intended to act independently of the decision of the Chamber in this matter. It is thus that a single recalcitrant member can nullify the vote of a whole Chamber. Northwood and Son were absolutely free to do what they chose, as they did not belong to this organization.

Captain Northwood thought Lewis Wallis's scheme a good one. It was to his interest in the Borneo trade that the price of sago-flour should be maintained on a paying level. Unless sago paid good profits his mortgages on the Brunei and Labuan factories were practically worthless. Busoni thought the scheme a splendid one and urged its being put into force at once.

It wanted, however, a lot of money to finance this thing. Lewis Wallis said he could get all the funds he needed. Northwoods' bankers said that the scheme seemed all

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right, especially if it originated with a man of Lewis Wallis's experience. The firm of Morison, Wallis and Co. was one of the oldest and most respectable in Singapore, and its credit was excellent. If Northwood and Son wanted money to finance their share of the business they could be quite certain of having it at their disposal.

The support of the banks settled the thing. The business had to be done promptly and quietly, if at all; and one fine morning, while most people were taking their morning rides or walks, a particularly early meeting was being held in the offices of Northwood and Son, which were crowded by the numerous Chinese interested in the sago-flour trade. Captain Northwood led the negotiations, while Lewis Wallis, Johnnie Northwood, Busoni, and Koh Say Kiat busied themselves filling up certain printed forms and getting them signed.

By the time the business men of Singapore came driving into town, the meeting was over, and the whole world's supply of sago-flour was in the hands of Northwood and Son and Morison, Wallis and Co.!

The combination worked like a charm. The Northwoods had at the time one thousand tons of sago-flour in stock, which cost them ten pounds per ton. After holding it for some time in the vain hope of a profit, they had offered it at this price to the British Patent Sugar Company, who promptly replied with a counter-offer of nine pounds ten shillings. This meant such a loss that it had to be rejected. It was this eternal pressure put on them to sell at a little less than cost price that made the Northwoods resolve to either go out of the trade or fall in with Lewis Wallis's idea of "cornering" supplies.

The news of the "corner" being public property, being indeed cabled in various directions amidst a good deal of talk and discussion, Johnnie Northwood sat tight. He cabled to his London agent that prices were advancing, but that was all. In two or three days, he got a message advising that the Sugar Company would buy one thousand

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tons at ten pounds, an offer immediately declined. Next day the Northwoods got a message asking at what price they would sell one thousand tons.

"I say, Busoni! Just cable that we'll sell a thousand tons at thirteen pounds, subject to immediate reply," Johnnie Northwood coolly ordered, as he handed the London cablegram back to Busoni.

The following day the Sugar Company bought at thirteen pounds the thousand tons for which they had refused to pay ten pounds. Thus in less than a week the Northwoods had cleared three thousand pounds over this single deal.

Morison, Wallis and Co. had done still better in Liverpool, where they had rushed prices up five pounds per ton and cleared about seven thousand pounds in the week. Lewis Wallis was quite excited about the situation, which could hardly be better. Johnnie Northwood thought that it might not pay in the end to rush the market as they were doing, but Wallis knew better and spoke of retiring from business at the end of the year and living like a little duke on some estate he was going to buy out of his profits on sago.

Naturally people talked a good deal about these things. Pretty women told Johnnie to his face what a delightfully clever person he was. The young man puzzled a good many sensible people, George Carlyle and Isaac Henson amongst the number. One or two prophesied his downfall and the ruin of all connected with him, but none heeded these croakers, and the Northwoods' credit stood higher than ever.

Brownlow and Co., happening to require some sago-flour for a New York client, George Carlyle asked young Northwood at what rate he would let him have the quantity required. The monopolist put on a profit of twenty-five per cent., and explained that although New York lay completely outside his sphere of operations, he was compelled to protect Liverpool and London interests by charging

A Little "Corner" in Sago-flour

New York a price which should prevent sago-flour from being re-exported to England. Carlyle laughed as he agreed to Northwoods' terms, but added: "I don't think you will find New York buying much more at your price!"

For some time the demand for sago-flour for both London and Liverpool was quite normal, and the "corner" continued to be a success. Then certain people in various parts of England found they could do without sago-flour. With nefarious ingenuity they ground up maize, turned potatoes into flour, and in general made anything with starch in it into glucose, which they did not scruple to sell to all sorts of breweries to put into the beer of the British Working Man. These immoral proceedings gave Northwood a good deal to think about, and he soon found that he would have to lower his prices to something very little above the normal if he did not want to be buried under a mountain of his flour. Besides, as ill-luck would have it, some meddling fiend appeared to have stimulated the production of sago to an extraordinary degree. Just at a time when it would have suited so well to have a short output of sago the stuff came pouring in as if it would never stop. The quantity of it was something unprecedented. This is a thing which mysteriously happens during the existence of most "corners." There is nothing like a "corner" for stimulating production.

However, Northwood had made a lot of hay while the sun shone, and by meeting the London market promptly had saved the situation. He kept the large profits already made and continued selling at prices which gave quite a decent return on the money employed in the business. This was a vast improvement on the days before the "corner," when the competition was such that business in sago-flour could only be done at a loss.

Meanwhile Lewis Wallis was keeping the price in Liverpool at the level of seventeen pounds, while Northwood was selling in London at under eleven pounds. The stuff that Northwood handled was much inferior to the best white

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sago shipped by Morison, Wallis and Co., but there was nothing to justify any such price as seventeen pounds in Liverpool.

Wallis would not hear of reducing prices in his market. He took forty per cent. of the whole production and could do exactly as he pleased with it, always provided that he did not interfere with Northwood and Son's own market. He said he was selling at seventeen pounds and would *not* take less. He was sending very large shipments to Liverpool, and there could be hardly any doubt about it, to Northwood's mind, that they were going forward unsold. But, after all, that was a matter which concerned the firm of Morison, Wallis and Co. exclusively. In any case, Northwood and Son stood to come out of the thing with their influence in the market greatly strengthened and with a handsome profit to their credit.

Everything at Battery Road now having taken a prosperous direction, it was now about time for Johnnie to devote his especial attention to affairs in the Moluccas. It was decided that he should leave for Amboina and the other islands as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DEWÁKAN REEF

ONCE again Johnnie Northwood found himself sailing out of Singapore harbour, on board the old *Alastor*.

It was now six months since Captain James Fletcher had taken over the command of the ship from Captain Bird, and it seemed to be a great change for the better.

James Fletcher was a fine, muscular fellow, who looked something like a good-tempered prize-fighter, with a nice, open, honest face. He had given every satisfaction during the past six months, and the Northwoods hoped that they had got one of the old-fashioned skippers who would stay with them for a long period of service.

A quick run was made to Ternate, where Northwood found the position much changed. The town and island had suffered severely from the volcanic disturbances and the cyclone, which had caused widespread destruction and great loss of life. Trade was very slack, and it seemed as if it would take Ternate a long time to recover from the disasters which had befallen it.

Van Swoll had been so affected by the death of his wife that he declared that he could endure Ternate no longer, and left for Holland on the first chance. It turned out that he had decided to send her across to his estate in Tidore out of danger from either volcanic eruption or earthquake. The prahu, however, got blown out of her course, and it was likely enough that her crew tried to board the *Alastor* as a last resource, only to be cut down

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by the stem of the steamer. All on board the frail craft were thus flung to their death in the midst of the roaring waves.

Cornelius van Papendrecht was also much affected by the events through which he had passed. He had become nervous, irritable and utterly indifferent to business. Apparently, he associated Johnnie Northwood in some way with his sister's death, if he was not the actual and direct cause of it. The gossips of Ternate, unsubdued by catastrophe, however intense, had a great deal to say about Madame van Swoll's tragic end.

The beautiful Van Swoll villa, partly shattered by the earthquake, was deserted and already becoming overgrown with weeds and creepers. The lovely grounds were now a wilderness. Van Papendrecht's handsome building was shored up with unsightly timbers which kept it together. No one seemed to care about permanent repairs. The whole establishment had become ill-kept and dirty, and a sort of demoralization had spread over it, while Cornelius himself drank gin continually, and in increasing quantities.

Northwood's heart sank within him. In Van Swoll he had found a powerful ally, who had now suddenly disappeared. Van Papendrecht had gone to pieces, and besides having become almost useless, was now suspicious and unfriendly. The confidence and cordiality of the first days had vanished. The whole island had been devastated. No one, either European or native, seemed to care about trying to replant or rebuild anything. Discouragement was general and invincible.

That the Moluccas trade was crippled to a grievous extent was very evident. As the *Alastor* sailed away from Ternate, Northwood surveyed the scene with an aching heart. It was all as beautiful and glorious as ever, but Ternate and Tidore no longer seemed like the treasure-laden spice islands which had so impressed him with their loveliness the first time he saw them.

At Banda the story was much the same as at Ternate.

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The handsome villas had been unroofed and much damaged. Warehouses had been blown down altogether and their precious contents destroyed. Not only had a crop of immense value been literally scattered to the winds, but what was much worse, hundreds of priceless nutmeg trees had been uprooted by the storm. Northwood was given a walking-stick made out of the heart of a nutmeg tree, a beautiful close-grained wood, taking a splendid polish. It would no doubt have been a rare and valuable curiosity at any other time, but now, alas! anyone wanting nutmeg-wood sticks could get them cheaply enough. Northwood proposed trimming the uprooted trees into logs and shipping them to Europe, but the Dutchmen were too disheartened to bother themselves about any such thing.

Blankert said the only trade to be done in Banda was to sell at long prices on long credits. Northwood would certainly get paid, but whether it would be in one, two, or three years depended entirely on events. "It does not matter to you," Blankert said, "*when* you get your money as long as you get it!" It was not at all an attractive business, but there was nothing else to be done, if the trade was to be secured when it revived again, as it necessarily must in the course of time.

At Amboina things were quite different. This island had escaped the visitation which had scourged Ternate and Banda. Shelby had a large quantity of cloves in his godowns ready for shipment, which would undoubtedly realize an exceedingly handsome profit. The schooner *Amboina* had just arrived from New Guinea with a cargo of gum copal, which had cost next door to nothing in coarse cloth, gin and beads. The rice and many other articles imported sold at big profits. Shelby had sent the *Ceylon* in ballast to Labuan to load a cargo of coal for the Dutch Government at a price which would easily yield a gain of one hundred per cent.

All this was very well, but Northwood found that there were some black shadows in this bright picture. He had

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noticed the *Coralie van Swoll* alongside the new petroleum wharf, and asked what she was doing there. He learned, to his vexation, that Shelby had just repurchased this steamer from Van Papendrecht, who was Van Swoll's attorney. Van Swoll would have nothing to do with the boat it appeared, and so Shelby cancelled the fifty thousand guilders still due, repaid half the fifty thousand guilders already received, and took possession of the steamer.

"You see, you have made twenty-five thousand guilders on the deal, anyway, and we want the steamer," he said. He was at his old game of involving the Northwoods in further capital expenditure.

In spite of Shelby's promises that the boat would pay for herself in a few months, Northwood was much depressed about this unfortunate transaction. At last he said: "Well, the thing's done and can't be helped! But we can't have a steamer called the *Coralie van Swoll* belonging to us. You must change her name!"

"Yes!" rejoined Shelby ominously. "I can understand that all right. It's most unlucky you got yourself mixed up in that affair. If you don't mind we'll call her the *Almaheira*."

As she had to fly the Dutch flag, a nominal Dutch owner had to be found for her, and pending all sorts of formalities, the little steamer lay idle at the wharf.

A visit to the kerosene wharf and stores was not gratifying. The godowns were crammed with case-oil quite unsaleable for the moment. Captain Hardy, finding his markets at Ternate and Banda closed to him, had sailed the old *Victory* into Amboina, and put a few thousand cases of kerosene on the market. The position was carefully nursed by Shelby, who sold small lots at ridiculously low prices, and brought about a total collapse of that particular trade. Hardy, having suffered a heavy loss instead of making the mighty profits of former days, sailed for the Sangir Islands, where he might have a chance of

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trading off the rest of his cargo for smoke-dried copra. This was not a very bright outlook at best, and Hardy vowed vengeance on Northwood and Shelby as he stormed up and down the main street of Amboina, unable to sell his rice and arrack or to buy a single sack of cloves.

“The old man is played out in the Moluccas,” said Shelby. “The wreck of Ternate and Banda has hit him much harder than it hit us. You threw away your chance of hitting him when he was down, and he thought he had made himself safe in Ternate, but the cyclone and the earthquakes have done what you wouldn’t. His trade is killed. He can dodge the old *Victory* round islands like Timor or Sangir, where we don’t want to go, but he’ll come here no more. I’ve fixed that for him all right! By the way, I suppose it’s all off between you and Mary Hardy?”

Northwood made no reply. He was in no way inclined to rejoice in the defeat of brave old Captain Hardy. That the old sailor should be angry and vindictive was a matter of no surprise. He had to admit that his projected marriage with Mary Hardy was a thing now impossible. That he had lost a splendid wife, whose qualities he admired and appreciated to the full, was a matter of infinite regret, but in his heart of hearts he knew quite well that he was not really in love with the young lady.

Poor Mary Hardy had abundant time in which to weep over the handsome lad, at one time almost her declared lover. But with Johnnie Northwood it was different. Shelby’s indiscreet question unmanned him for a moment, and his eyes were misty with something like tears. Then he pulled himself together, and said brusquely: “Now what about the sago-factory, and the rest of the Sungei Mas Estate?”

Well, the sago-factory had been built, and was in working order, but it didn’t exactly turn out well. The soft Ambonese natives found the very hard labour of rasping the wire-like fibres of the sago-palm a job not at all to

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their liking, and the factory was practically at a standstill. Shelby had overlooked this little point of the labour question. Northwood suggested importing Chinese coolies. This would have been a sensible solution of the difficulty, but there were almost insuperable difficulties in the shape of Dutch regulations. Shelby had his scheme as usual. "Send me down some disintegrators," he said, "and we'll hammer the stuff to bits. Steam machinery is what's wanted for sago-production, not the old-fashioned coolie power!"

So machinery was now wanted which would cost a lot more money. It was evident that the Sungei Mas Estate was not to yield its golden profits quite so easily as Shelby had predicted.

Seeing that Northwood looked gloomy, Shelby went on another tack: "I've landed some of our spirits here," he explained, "because my godowns in town are full. There's a trade for you! We are selling in thousands of cases at a profit of two hundred per cent. You've hit the thing we want exactly right! Our blue and yellow label is getting known all through the islands, and for hundreds of miles of the New Guinea coast. I am giving Murphy a whole cargo of it to take back with him to Doreh. It's a cute idea having that metal capsule instead of pitch over the corks; it looks much better, and tickles the natives to death. We shall certainly get the whole of the spirit trade in our hands!"

This trade in spirits was a source of very considerable profit, and no small amount of care and ingenuity had been spent upon it. A large portion of the upper floor of the Battery Road godowns was given up to blending, colouring and bottling arrack for the Moluccas trade. The arrack itself was imported from Java, and was of excellent quality. The Singapore water added to it was all that could be desired, while the colouring matter which imparted a rich port-wine tint to the spirit was quite harmless. A quiet yellow label with a nice blue elephant

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printed upon it was rapidly becoming known as the fashionable brand throughout a very large territory.

While Northwood was looking into affairs at Amboina, Captain Fletcher had been sent for a short cruise in the *Alastor* to Salawatti and Waigiou. On his return he had a story to tell of how his ship had nearly been sunk by a whale. He was on the bridge when he saw an enormous whale making straight for the *Alastor*. Lifting its huge head when a few yards off, the monster dived right under the keel of the steamer, so that its flukes were at one moment high in the air, and appeared to be almost directly over the ship's bridge. Fletcher said it was a most alarming moment, but that the whale got clear without touching anything.

Shelby said the waters in that vicinity were full of sperm whales, and that it was easy to see, from the curiosity of Fletcher's whale to inspect the *Alastor*, that they were never hunted. He grieved long and loud over the wasted opportunities in these seas. There were sperm whales in plenty; there were shoals and shoals of what the Dutch call "brown fish," which are full of oil. "Just think of it!" groaned Shelby. "Millions of barrels of the finest oil in the world are floating about these waters in the shape of fish which no one cares to catch. Anyone with a nice steam whaler, and with a station on one or two of the islands to boil and store oil, would make a colossal fortune inside of two years. There was a thousand per cent. in it!"

"Oh, nonsense!" roared Northwood. "You surely don't want us to go in for whaling? Why not get the gold out of the sunken Spanish galleons lying in a few fathoms of water somewhere off Banda?"

Shelby replied that it was all very well to laugh at him, but there was a lot of horse sense in what he had just said. Captain Fletcher wished that he had money enough to go in for such a venture; he would do it at once. There must have been tons of oil in the whale that dived

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under the *Alastor*, almost as if it was asking to be caught. Besides, look at the price of whalebone!

The captain's eyes were fairly glittering with greed as he thought of all this floating wealth, so easily to be acquired and yet despised by everybody. Now, if *he* were in Northwood's shoes, things would be different. His brain was getting a bit turned by the fatal climate of the Moluccas. What was Shelby, now the greatest trader in the Moluccas, but a mate on board that old wind-jammer the *Victory*! For that matter, who was his celebrated employer, Captain Northwood? Even his own brother John, as commander of the *Brunei*, was putting money in the bank every trip. He had bought a shop-house in Labuan for five thousand dollars one voyage and sold it for ten thousand dollars the next to a Chinaman who wanted the place badly. That was something like! And here was he, James Fletcher, on a trade where he didn't see his way to make a cent except his pay! No, it wouldn't do, and perhaps one day people would find that he was as good as any, and better than some.

As a matter of fact, there was a nice little conspiracy brewing, which had escaped even the vigilance of Shelby. Captain Hardy had started the thing by getting Cornelius van Papendrecht to nourish doubts which led to positive ill-feeling towards Northwood. Bird had been spreading all sorts of reports in Singapore about the vast profits made by Northwood and Shelby in the Moluccas, and had discussed the matter fully with both the Fletchers, who were getting quite silly over the situation. Acting on Hardy's advice, James Fletcher had sounded Van Papendrecht each voyage about starting a sort of combined opposition to Northwood and Shelby, and bit by bit got the Dutchman fairly well committed to the scheme. The thing was well done in so far that it was kept very quiet. Revenge and greed were sufficiently powerful motives for discretion on the part of the prime movers in this precious affair.

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Owing to the recent disasters in Ternate and Banda, the *Alastor* was still half empty when she finished loading at Amboina. Shelby had his plan as usual. When he returned from Singapore to Amboina in the Dutch mail-boat, he had taken the opportunity of talking things over with Wouwerman and Co. at Macassar, whose agents at Gorontalo were De Jongh and Co. Wouwerman thought the *Alastor* should do very well in Celebes. Shelby now suggested that she should go to Gorontalo and Macassar on the way to Singapore.

Northwood objected that to take in the northern port of Gorontalo would add greatly to the length of the voyage. But Shelby insisted that it was necessary to prospect for further business. "Anyway, our vessels go zig-zag from one island to another, not in the order you find them on the chart, but as the necessities of the trade demand. If you will go to Gorontalo first, I shall be able to get a letter to Macassar by to-morrow's quarterly mail-boat, and Wouwerman will be ready for you by the time you get there."

Northwood signed articles of partnership with Shelby, so that the firm of NORTHWOOD AND SHELBY was now formally established. Having settled everything in Amboina, Johnnie went on board the *Alastor* and sailed for Celebes.

Gorontalo proved to be an interesting port, situated in a mountainous country of much beauty. Celebes is a huge island of which very little is really known. The country in the interior is said to resemble Switzerland, but the powerful tribes which inhabit the mountains will not allow Europeans to penetrate into their territory. Of course, the Dutch are able to do as they please on the coast, and have established themselves at various ports. The country is said to be very rich indeed. One Dutch gold-mining concern in Celebes pays dividends of one hundred per cent., and its one hundred guilder shares stand at over one thousand.

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Northwood was very cordially received by De Jongh, with whom he did quite a good business in gum copal of a very much finer kind than that found in New Guinea. Quite pleased with his visit to Gorontalo, he next sailed for Macassar, a real Dutch colony, on the edge of a hot, steaming plain. The town is of considerable size, and is protected by an ancient fort of decrepit appearance, which has not even the merit of being picturesque.

Wouverman was a big, immensely fat Dutchman of the old school, who hospitably invited Northwood to stay with him while he was at Macassar. He lived in a great big barracks of a place, paved with marble, and as cool and comfortable as any place in Macassar could be made. When dinner was announced Northwood was seated next his host. A rather nice-looking European lady sat at the other end of the long table, but Northwood was not introduced to her, nor did he ever find out who she was. The other seats were occupied by a perfect swarm of children of different ages and of all colours from blonde to black. Wouverman made no attempt to explain this enormous and variegated family, all the members of which hailed him as "papa," and appeared to be on a footing of absolute equality.

It is a terrific place for insects. Leather pads were placed on the seats of the chairs as a protection against mosquitoes, while the glasses on the table had lacquered covers to them. If the covers were removed for more than a few seconds, the wine or beer they contained was soon a struggling mass of winged things.

Wouverman proved himself to be an intelligent man of business, with much more activity than could have been expected from anyone of his huge bulk. In four days the *Alastor* was at last crammed to the hatches and could load no more. During these days Fletcher had practically nothing to do on board his ship, but he was constantly about Wouverman's office, and seemed very keen on learning all he could about the trade of Macassar. North-

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wood had noticed this propensity of his captain's before, but merely put it down to a praiseworthy desire to show an intelligent interest in his work.

The *Alastor* sailed from Macassar at noon and steamed through an oily sea on her way to Singapore direct. The heat was intense, but Northwood had to turn the saloon into an office and work hard at invoices and all sorts of accounts. Fletcher saw him at his weary task, and cheerfully announced that he was going to his cabin on deck to have a nice sleep through the heat of the day. Towards evening a breeze sprang up. Northwood at last packed up his papers and went on deck for some welcome fresh air. Here he was joined by the captain, who immediately ordered all sail to be set, as it was a fine, favouring wind. With all her canvas on her the *Alastor* was soon bowling along at a great rate.

"You must have done awfully well in Gorontalo and Macassar," Fletcher remarked. "You got a lot of valuable produce very cheap, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did! The Dutchmen did not seem to have a market for their heavy stocks, and were glad to have me take them off their hands for immediate payment in goods or my bills on a Dutch bank. The gum copal especially is very fine and should leave a big profit. It is always wanted in Singapore."

"It is a splendid trade altogether, Mr. Northwood."

"Certainly it has unusually fine possibilities," Johnnie agreed, "but it is a trade which wants a lot of working."

Here he broke off the conversation, as he wanted to have a look at Cassim, who was in his cabin suffering from a very bad attack of fever. He was so ill that there had been some talk of leaving him in the hospital at Macassar, but the old *serang* had begged so hard to be taken to Singapore that he had been allowed to have his wish.

After dinner Northwood and Fletcher were pacing the quarter-deck together. The wind had freshened con-

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siderably. The moon was rising and the sky and sea were becoming more radiant with her beautiful light every minute.

Then the captain, as he smoked his cigar, said: "We shall be off the tail of the Dewákan reef by about eleven o'clock to-night. My brother William lost a very fine sailing ship called the *Stella* on this reef some years ago, and lost his certificate into the bargain. However, it was lucky he didn't lose his life, too, over the job. Those natives on Dewákan Island are a nasty, piratical lot, who are a jolly sight too handy with their weapons!"

"Well," replied Johnnie, "mind you don't pile *us* up on the reef and leave the *Alastor* where the *Stella* is!"

Captain Fletcher seemed to think that this was a very good joke indeed. Fancy two brothers piling up two ships on the Dewákan Reef! No! *that* would be all right, and if the *Alastor* could only carry this splendid sailing breeze with her a little longer they would make a smart run to Singapore.

Soon after this Northwood, feeling very tired, decided to "turn in," and went to his cabin, but found that he could not sleep there. Slipping on a white drill suit he took refuge on one of the hard leather-covered settees in the saloon, just beneath the skylight. Here he was much cooler. Just before he went off to sleep, he noticed by the dim light of a swinging lamp that it was ten p.m. by the saloon clock.

Presently he was rudely aroused from his slumbers by a terrific crash and a shock which threw him on the saloon floor. Something very hard and heavy struck him as he fell on the floor. This something turned out to be Captain Fletcher, who had been sleeping on the next settee, and having been flung on top of him, rolled right over him.

Johnnie was the first to understand the situation. He looked at the clock and saw that it was *three minutes past eleven!* They were on the Dewákan Reef!

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"Hallo, Captain!" he shouted. "You're damned punctual, aren't you?"

Fletcher swore as freely as a man can in a few seconds, and then made a rush for the deck, closely followed by the other.

On deck all was confusion. The *Alastor* had been driven on the reefs under a full head of steam and with all her sails set, on a brilliant moonlit night. She was now piled up, with her bow in something like six feet of water, amidst boiling seas which raged white all round the ship, and great black, ragged reefs, which were waiting to rend her to pieces. Aloft, spars, sails and ropes were whirling about in every direction. Not the slightest attempt was being made by anyone to save the ship. The second officer, a German named Schmidt, in whose watch the *Alastor* had run on the reefs, was hurrying aimlessly up and down the quarter-deck with a white face, without saying a word or doing a thing.

Captain Fletcher's first action was to accuse Schmidt, with a fearful oath, of being asleep on his watch, his next to fell him with a tremendous blow. This naturally did not improve matters in any way, but increased the panic amongst the crew to an uncontrollable degree. The captain, having vented his wrath on Schmidt, recovered his coolness in a moment, and ordered the chief officer to look lively and stow the sails. This was done with great difficulty and eased the ship considerably.

Meanwhile, the engines were going full speed astern without the slightest effect. The situation looked desperate. Sheets of spray were flying over the stern of the ship, and Johnnie Northwood, feeling that he would like to get into a dry corner as long as such a thing existed, said to Captain Fletcher: "I'm going below. If you are thinking of taking to the boats or anything of the kind, you might let me know."

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Northwood!" Fletcher bellowed in reply. "You're the only European on board

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who can speak Malay properly, and you'll help me to get the *Alastor* off the Dewákan Reef. Come along the decks with me and talk to the crew. They will do a lot for you yet."

As they passed the engine-room they heard a pandemonium going on down below. Looking into those heated regions, Johnnie saw McCracken flatten out a couple of Chinese firemen with a shovel; but this did not prevent the rest of them from swarming up the iron ladders and escaping along the decks to the forecastle. On the main-deck the native sailors were found hiding behind steam winches and all sorts of places, and were promptly hunted out of them.

Fletcher said the ship must be lightened forward, and the only way of doing it was to take off the No. 1 and No. 2 hatches, start the steam winches, and sling the cargo from these holds into the sea. Northwood, of course, consented.

While he was talking the tindals into a sense of their duty, little Lapis slid up to him, and asked his master if he wanted anything. Yes, his master wanted his revolver and, if possible, a bottle of beer! Presently the nimble Lapis appeared with his master's heavy Colt's revolver in its leather case, which Johnnie strapped to his side, and he put down a bottle of Bass with a tremendous zest, heightened by the feeling that it was probably his last drink of anything but salt water in this world.

Thus refreshed, he started with Fletcher to explore the forecastle. Here they discovered some skulking sailors, whom their captain drove on deck with blows and curses. Here also were McCracken's escaped Chinese firemen, snugly tucked into their berths and busily employed, despite the pounding of the ship, in lighting their opium-lamps and pipes. They wanted to have one more good smoke of opium before they died, and they wanted to die easy. However, they were wanted urgently by McCracken,

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and that was much more to the point. Northwood and Fletcher started in with a will to upset the opium-lamps, to smash the pipes and to haul the Chinamen out of their bunks by their pigtails. It was no time for anything else but sheer brutality. One huge Chinese fireman drew his knife, but Northwood pushed the muzzle of his revolver slap into the man's teeth and swore he would blow his head off if that knife was not dropped at once. It was dropped! The firemen were got on deck somehow and literally beaten and kicked into their engine-room, where McCracken was waiting for them with a spanner in his hand.

After much effort the hatches were got off the Nos. 1 and 2 holds and the steam winches set going in the work of discharging cargo into the sea.

It was a weird sight, and it can be imagined with what feelings Northwood beheld tons of his carefully selected gum copal of the finest quality being hurriedly dropped into the seething waves!

Quite suddenly and unexpectedly the *Alastor* slid off into deep water.

Northwood rejoined Captain Fletcher on the bridge. The sky was becoming overcast and the light of the moon very doubtful, while the sea was rising. Northwood was surprised, therefore, when the captain declared that he could find a channel clear to the open sea. To the landsman, there was nothing in sight but a vast mass of broken water more like a raging cataract than anything else. However, he knew that Fletcher had the eye of a hawk and he had great confidence in his seamanship. It appeared that there was no holding ground for anchors, and that the only thing to be done was to make for the open.

Very carefully Captain Fletcher took the *Alastor* through miles of dangers. It was touch and go all the time, but at last with a joyous shout the captain said they were free now, and rang on "Full speed ahead." The answer-

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ing signal came from the engine-room and the *Alastor* was running fast through the water when she brought up with a tremendous crash much worse than the first. She seemed to have struck something from stem to stern, then she got free, raced along for a few hundred yards amongst broken water, and fetched up dead on a shallow reef!

The whole thing was too sickening for words. The revulsion of feeling to all on board was simply cruel! Captain Fletcher was dumbfounded, though he soon recovered himself. The position was much worse than before. The fact that the ship had been lightened forward enabled her to run so much further up on the reef. The send of the sea was sweeping her stern round so that she would be broadside on to the reef and break up in a few minutes. A kedge dropped over the stern checked this movement, but after a few minutes the anchor began to drag.

Fletcher now discovered a big patch of coral astern, which almost attained to the dignity of an island. Lowering a lifeboat, he put Schmidt, with a crew and an anchor into it. With many a mighty oath he told Schmidt to take that anchor off to the coral patch and drop it so that it would stand any strain until the cable broke. It was a difficult and dangerous service, but the wretched Schmidt undertook it without a murmur, and away went the lifeboat with the anchor which would perhaps save the *Alastor*. Meanwhile, the hatches were again taken off and the crew set to work to discharge cargo into the sea. Presently the chief officer reported that Schmidt had evidently moored his anchor, so the cable was bent on to one of the steam winches and a strain put on which the anchor resisted splendidly. With this assistance the *Alastor* came off once more into deep water.

No sooner was she afloat than Captain Fletcher proposed to make a dash for the open sea. But Northwood, who stuck to him like a shadow, objected vigorously, and

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wanted to know what was to become of Schmidt and the boat's crew. "Damn Schmidt and the boat's crew!" roared the captain, quite beside himself. "Let them find their way to Macassar as best they can! I'm off to the open sea this minute."

"No, you don't, Captain Fletcher!" said Northwood. "Schmidt and his men must come on board before you move the engines. What's more, I happen to be the owner of the *Alastor*, and you have my positive instructions not to make any attempt to clear the reefs until broad daylight. If you make the slightest attempt to defy me, I shall make such a report to the Harbour Master at Singapore that your certificate will be suspended at once! You have made a hideous mess of the whole business, you know you have! Now pull yourself together and do as I tell you, or it will be the worse for you!"

Northwood's square-set jaw boded no good to anyone who dared oppose him at this moment, and the big bully collapsed under the pressure of a superior mind backed up by equal muscle and fighting power.

"All right, Mr. Northwood!" groaned the captain, as he blew the whistle, adding a piercing steam shriek to the melancholy sound of the wind and the waves. Schmidt and his crew finally got on board dripping wet and dead-beat.

Captain Fletcher after feeling his way about very carefully, at last found some sort of holding-ground and anchored the *Alastor* until it should be broad daylight.

Meanwhile, Northwood found that he was absolutely played out the minute that the pressure of responsibility was lifted a little. He told Fletcher that he was going to the saloon for a little sleep and repeated his orders. Getting into some dry clothes, he saw by the saloon clock that it was four a.m., and throwing himself on a settee went off instantly into a dead sleep.

It seemed to Northwood that he had been sleeping for about ten minutes when he was roughly roused by one of the sailors, who told him the captain wanted him on deck

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at once. A glance at the clock showed that it was five-thirty a.m., and it was the dawn of day which showed through the skylight. Wondering what was up, he hurried to the bridge, where Fletcher was waiting for him. The scene from the bridge was marvellous. The wind had died away completely, the sea was glassy, and mirrored the *Alastor* and her tall masts to the life. The steamer was in a deep pool surrounded on every side for miles and miles with endless reefs. The sea in fact, was absolutely ribbed and veined with reefs, which showed themselves clearly enough through the still water. Two of the ship's boats were out taking soundings. To all appearance the *Alastor* was completely entrapped in a hideous place from which there was no issue.

The mystery was how the devil did she get there? Captain Fletcher surmised that she had broken clean through the outer coral reef and was now in the centre, or thereabouts, of the whole system of the Dewákan reefs. "She's a grand ship!" he said. "She's got a sharp floor that's just like a wedge when she thumps, and her thick iron frame and plates will stand anything! If we'd been here in the new steel steamer my brother brought out for your father a few months ago, she would have been crushed like an eggshell when we struck the first time, and we should all have been food for the fishes since last night. But *that's* what I want you to look at!"

So saying, Fletcher indicated a large island in the distance. Between the island and the ship was a rapidly nearing fleet of prahus, representing an entirely new kind of danger.

Johnnie Northwood volunteered to attend to the arming of the crew and set to work accordingly. He ran across McCracken on the main-deck. "What d'ye make of yon?" said the engineer. "Pirates? Pirates! Well just you let *me* get at them, Mr. Northwood. I'll make 'em sorry they were ever born. Those that is left of them will never come near a *steamer* again!"

The Dewákan Reef

With these mysterious words McCracken vanished into his engine-room.

Northwood served out Snider rifles to such of the crew as could be trusted to use them properly. He had his own weapons carefully loaded and placed on the skylight: his shot-gun, his Rigby Express, and a powerful Hotchkiss repeating rifle; and, of course, he kept his Colt's revolver handy. As the prahus got close to the *Alastor* Northwood had one of the brass guns fired, which sent a round shot whizzing right over them. This checked the advance of the boats from the island, which was the result desired. In the meantime McCracken and the third engineer had fixed up a hose with a bright nozzle, which they had got on the main-deck.

"Just look at this, Mr. Northwood! If yon savages get troublesome, we'll just squirt some bilin' watter over them and see how they like *that!*" So saying, he threw a column of boiling water clear over the ship's side, which hissed and steamed most suggestively as it fell into the sea. It certainly looked as if McCracken had as effective a way as anyone else on board of dealing with pirates.

Presently the prahus slowly got so close to the *Alastor* that Northwood was able to hail them in Malay. One of the islanders replied that they were good and peaceable people, who had come to give assistance. Northwood replied that if they were good and peaceable people, only one boat at a time would come alongside the ship, and warned them that they would be fired upon unless this condition was observed.

A boat came alongside and about half a dozen of the islanders got on board. They were powerful and exceedingly active ruffians, in whom it was impossible to have the slightest confidence. Like most natives they had a whole string of questions to ask, and were particularly anxious to know what kind of cargo she carried. Also they wanted presents of all kinds. They said that they could easily pilot the *Alastor* to the open sea.

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At this point Captain Fletcher shouted: "Look out for those fellows in the rigging, Mr. Northwood! Surely enough, half a dozen of the islanders were swarming up the rigging of the mainmast, evidently with the intention of dropping on the deck, but Johnnie covered the leading man with his Hotchkiss rifle, and was just about to press the trigger. "*Tuntu lu mati*" ("You certainly die!") he shouted. The fellow seemed to understand his own particular peril very clearly indeed, for he instantly flung up his arms and forthwith slid like a flash into the sea. The next man did not like the look of Northwood and his rifle either and he dropped into the sea also. In a very short time the rigging was cleared of the natives without a shot being fired.

After a long parley over the ship's side two natives were allowed on board to pilot the *Alastor*, who were to receive one hundred guilders each and various presents if they took the ship clear of the reefs, while it was understood that something very unpleasant would happen to them if she stranded again.

For a time all went well. The two natives on the bridge evidently knew the whole system of the reefs beautifully, and the *Alastor* was threading her way out to the open sea slowly but surely, when suddenly Captain Fletcher saw that his treacherous pilots were quietly leading him into the worst trap of the lot. He instantly rang the engines full-speed astern. The stem of the ship had barely touched the fringe of the reef when the reversed action of the propeller took effect, and the *Alastor* shot astern. In less than a minute she struck heavily. Her engines brought up because the propeller was completely embedded in soft coral. This was worse than ever!

Captain Fletcher started the game by knocking down the two pilots, after which he kicked them down the ladder to the main-deck, where they were treated to a shower of blows from a belaying-pin by Mr. Crawford, the chief officer. Finally, some of the sailors flung the ruffians

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overboard. They swam off to their boats apparently none the worse for treatment which would have broken the limbs of any but fine, healthy savages with an instinct for murder and plunder.

All sorts of efforts to work the ship off by means of her sails failed completely, so after a consultation it was decided to risk everything and to start the engines full speed ahead. If the propeller blades snapped off, as might be expected, the only thing to be done was to fight the natives, and then send an armed boat to Macassar for assistance.

The critical moment came. McCracken put on the engines full speed ahead. The ship quivered and trembled under the pressure, when suddenly the water astern boiled and whirled madly, large pieces of soft coral flew into the air, and amidst a spontaneous cheer from the crew, the *Alastor* steamed clear away from the reef and a most serious danger.

Captain Fletcher rang off the engines almost immediately, because he was now going to trust to his own boats to find a way out of the reefs. Just then, however, the natives ran their prahus alongside the motionless steamer and with surprising rapidity a number of them were on her deck.

They were all armed. Some of them had old-fashioned pistols in their hands, things carrying a ball an inch in diameter, but which, at close ranges, will knock a much larger hole into a man than the most scientific automatic weapon yet invented.

Johnnie Northwood, whose business it was, did not find it quite so easy to start the shooting. He had a heavy Colt's revolver ready cocked in his hand. There a few inches in front of him was a group of excited savages discussing something very eagerly in their own dialect—no doubt how *they* were going to start the fighting. What was easier than to raise his pistol and open fire on the men before him! Six shots would lay out six of them, and

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send the rest of them flying to their boats. But he could not do it, the thing was too much like murder and too little like fighting. The natives must begin the attack before he fired a shot. So he sent Mr. Crawford and three armed sailors to join Captain Fletcher on the bridge, and, picking up Mr. Schmidt and some of the other sailors, was proceeding to the quarter-deck with them. Coming across McCracken, he ordered him aft to what was to be the citadel, with his tribe of engineers and firemen.

"Not me, sir!" said McCracken. "I shall be busy on the main-deck! No, sir! I'm *not* goin' to direck a stream of bilin' watter on they savages. It wud be worse than shootin' them, I admit! But I'm goin' to *wash the decks* wi' hot watter, and if they pirates happen to get what I might ca' a *fibath*, it'll no kill the scoundrels!"

"All right, McCracken, I understand. But be quick or you will have those fellows on top of you!" So saying, Johnnie rushed to the poop and catching up his Hotchkiss rifle, posted himself so as to beat off an attack on McCracken.

Apparently the natives intended to rush the fore-castle first. Their chattering and shouting had at last ceased, and something decisive was about to happen, when suddenly a wave of boiling water went hissing along the port side of the main-deck and washed right in amongst the principal body of the islanders and their chief. Horny as their naked feet were, the natives danced about in agony and threw themselves overboard in headlong panic. "Noo, Sandy, come along and we'll wash 'em off the star-board deck!" The mere sight of McCracken and his hose, however, was quite enough for the marauders, who had witnessed the discomfiture of their comrades, and they promptly went overboard, yelling horribly as they dropped into their boats or into the sea. A few of them picked up in other parts of the ship were severely beaten with anything which came to hand and flung overboard.

The *Alastor* was once more clear of the islanders, but

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their prahus still hung about the steamer, which was now just moving through the water. Captain Fletcher sent for Northwood to ask if he could not beat off these prahus with rifle fire or any other means, as they prevented the *Alastor's* boats taking soundings, and the ship was being thereby endangered. Northwood said he would see to it and went aft.

The prahus had now dropped astern, but kept at such an easy distance that they could overtake the steamer entangled in the reefs at any time. Suddenly a sputter of musketry broke out from the prahus, and from one of the largest of them a large round shot dropped just a little short of the *Alastor's* rudder. Another prahu, much smaller but swifter, dashed in quite close, and fired a shot from an iron gun mounted on a platform amidships, which narrowly missed carrying away the rudder—this evidently being the object of the pirates.

The *Alastor* promptly replied with her brass guns. Northwood's first shot flew over the nearest prahu, which had just fired at the *Alastor*, but it hit another boat paddling up to take part in the fray full in the bow. Her crew made frantic efforts to get her to the nearest patch of coral, but she sank beneath them, and they had to swim for it to a reef, where they stood half in and half out of the water until they were rescued.

With his second shot from the gun on the port quarter Northwood did much better, for he sent it through the attacking prahu with the gun mounted amidships right on the water-line. This broke up the frail craft, and the sea was dotted with black heads, the owners of which were vigorously swimming to the other prahus.

Some half-dozen Malay sailors, grinning from ear to ear as they did so, opened a rapid fire with their Sniders on the pirates struggling in the water. Fortunately, being the worst of bad shots, they did not hit anyone. But the singing of so many bullets over the water added greatly to the panic of the enemy, who now feeling that they had

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had quite enough of it, paddled off at full speed for their island, whereupon Northwood stopped the fusillade from the *Alastor's* poop.

Thus ended this bloodless battle. For, to the best of the knowledge of Northwood, or anyone else on board the *Alastor*, not a single pirate had been killed throughout this singular affair. Two of the Dewákan islanders' prahus had been sunk, and one of their few and highly-prized cannon had gone to the bottom in deep water, from which there was small chance of its being recovered. Several of the pirates had been very roughly handled and flung into a sea in which they could swim like fishes. The main-deck of the *Alastor* was strewn with wide-mouthed pistols, ancient muskets, spears, krisses and parangs, and even articles of clothing, which their late owners had left behind them prior to flinging themselves over the ship's side. The scoundrels had come to shear, and were shorn of some of their most cherished possessions. The Dewákan islanders had been taught a lesson!

McCracken's foot-bath (the worthy man himself called it a *fibbath*), in due course of time, got to be a standing joke, of which McCracken himself never tired.

And now Captain Fletcher, being relieved of all other troubles, was quietly feeling his way out to sea. All the officers being away in the boats, Johnnie and the old engineer sat down together for a very belated breakfast. Northwood was exceedingly tired after being up all night in such critical circumstances, but he was as hungry as a hawk. McCracken's appetite was simply wolfish. Both were glad to be alive and well instead of lying about in coral beds with slit throats or shattered heads. Soon the pair of them went off for a sorely needed sleep.

About five p.m. Northwood went on deck again, where he found Captain Fletcher looking drawn and haggard, but able to say, with a weary smile, that the *Alastor* was at last clear of the Dewákan Reef and going full speed ahead on her way to Singapore.

The Dewákan Reef

During the remainder of the voyage the captain showed himself to be exceedingly nervous about the consequences of the Dewákan Reef affair. He was horribly afraid that his certificate might be dealt with, and was constantly imploring Johnnie to plead his cause with his father. "If Captain Northwood chooses to back me up with the Harbour Master, it will be all right for me!" he frequently remarked.

Johnnie assured the captain repeatedly that he would do his best to avoid any serious trouble in this matter, and that he quite hoped that his father would take a lenient view of the case. No one knew better than Fletcher himself what a particularly bad case it was. He had no earthly business to be fast asleep when the ship struck, nor was his subsequent conduct, either in knocking down the officer of the watch or in many other ways, easy to defend against any official or other person who chose to attack it.

The captain of the *Alastor* was, Johnnie noticed to his surprise, in a state of constant curiosity about the movements of the *Victory*. As they were steaming into Singapore harbour, the captain looked carefully round the shipping with his binoculars and said: "There's no sign of the *Victory*. I wonder where she can possibly be?"

"But why are you taking such a keen interest in Captain Hardy and his ship?" inquired Northwood.

"Oh! I don't know!" replied Captain Fletcher very awkwardly. "It's always well to know what the enemy is doing."

Shortly after this conversation the *Alastor* dropped her anchors in Singapore harbour, having come home after yet another long voyage.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TUG OF WAR

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD and his son sat in the big broad front verandah of Woodleigh, enjoying the coolness of the evening and the beautiful scene of the fresh green lawns dotted with trees, and the splendid beds of roses and other flowers which surrounded them.

“ Well, Johnnie ! ” said his father with a cheery laugh. “ You are a regular Mother Cary’s chicken. You can’t go afloat without getting into cyclones and volcanic eruptions or else amongst reefs and pirates. As it is, I think you practically saved the ship this time. I’m sure I don’t know what they would have done without you. As for James Fletcher, what is to be said of a man who has been asleep half the day, turning in at ten p.m. and leaving the ship in the hands of a German mate, of whom he knows nothing, and who, of course, follows his master’s example and goes to sleep too ? What else could you expect ? Anything more lubberly or unsailorlike than James Fletcher’s conduct throughout the whole affair I can hardly imagine. I have given him a jolly good talking to on the subject, and having done so much, I am, of course, busy helping this lame dog over his particularly awkward stile.”

“ What about McCracken ? ” asked Johnnie.

“ Well, I think a handsome gold watch, with a suitable inscription, will please his vanity better than anything else perhaps. And as for you, you young scamp, you think far too much of yourself already, but I must give

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you credit for coming very well out of this thing. That you were plucky enough is nothing ; it is open to any fool to be a man in that respect, but you kept your head cool and kept yourself and everybody else well in hand. That's not so easy ! ”

“ I am particularly delighted,” Captain Northwood continued, “ that you did not end in shooting down a lot of those Dewákan islanders. That's what the ordinary fat-headed brute with a repeating rifle in his hands would rejoice in doing, and think that he was fighting. No, my boy ! Never ill-treat or kill a native if you can possibly help it. It's ungentlemanly and wicked, and it never pays in the long run. Oh, yes, I know I've killed a few pirates myself. But I assure you that, although it was entirely their own fault, I regret that I had to fire on them to save the lives in my care. Besides, I have known pirates who were quite decent people once they were on shore. However, here comes your mother to tell us once more that her little Johnnie must never go to sea again ! ”

Oddly enough, that was precisely the thing that Mrs. Northwood *did* say, whereupon both men laughed merrily, much to her surprise.

The *Alastor* was discharged and docked, when it was found that the fine old steamer was very little damaged. The paint was all scraped off her bottom, but otherwise she was practically all right.

Captain Fletcher also got off very easily. The Harbour Master told him that he was particularly fortunate in having such owners as Northwood and Son to deal with, but as they made no complaint, and there had been no serious damage to the *Alastor*, and no loss of life in connection with the strandings on the Dewákan Reef, nothing more need be said about the matter. The cargo jettisoned again happened to be a matter which concerned the owners of the *Alastor* and no one else.

The Harbour Master gave Fletcher to understand that he did not think much of his seamanship, and severely

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admonished him to be more careful in future. But there the whole affair ended.

Captain Fletcher, having got off scot-free himself, was by no means generous in his treatment of Schmidt. He dismissed the unlucky German with a "dirty ticket," by way of enforcing his assertion that Schmidt was solely and wholly responsible for the stranding of the *Alastor*.

Barely had these points been settled, and the *Alastor* undocked, when the Northwoods were more than astonished to receive the following letter :

" Steamship *Alastor*,

" Singapore Roads.

" MESSRS. NORTHWOOD AND SON.

" *Present.*

" GENTLEMEN,

" Please have my account made up at once with cheque for balance due to me. Will call at noon to-day, when trust you will have account and cheque ready, as for urgent reasons I am quitting your service immediately. Would like to leave to-day, if possible, and must therefore request settlement when I call at your office.

" Yours truly,

" JAMES FLETCHER."

" Well, I'm shot ! " said old Northwood. " What the mischief does this mean ? Of all the insolent, ungrateful letters I have seen this is quite the worst ! "

" It means mischief ! " rejoined his son. " Well, we'll get rid of the fellow at once, since he is in such a hurry to go. "

Antony Arratoon was told to make up the captain's wages account and draw a cheque for the balance due to him. Captain Northwood himself undertook to settle the crew's wages and ship's accounts with the chief officer, so that there was not much to be done.

At the time he fixed, in walked Captain Fletcher, looking

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very sullen and hang-dog. He nodded curtly to Johnnie, who took no notice of him. Arratoon marched the man up to Captain Northwood, who looked up from his work and said: "Oh, you are here, are you? Is that account right? Very well! Sign across the stamp. Here's your cheque. You haven't troubled to make up any ship's accounts, have you? No, I thought as much! Well, I'll do that for you myself. Moved your traps off the *Alastor*, I hope? Ah! you've looked after that much, have you? That's all right! Now then, come across to the Shipping Office and I'll get you signed off the ship's articles at once. Pick up your hat! Look sharp, will you? I want to clear you out of this office! Come along this way, and be lively about it!"

The whole thing was done in two or three minutes, and the astonished Fletcher, who had expected remonstrances and all sorts of questions, which might possibly lead to his making terms for himself with the Northwoods, found himself being turned out of their office, cheque in hand, very much like a mangy cur, without anyone appearing to take the slightest interest in him or his movements beyond a hearty desire to get rid of him.

The scene at the Shipping Office was hardly calculated to raise Fletcher's spirits. The Master Attendant, Captain Marshall, R.N., a retired naval officer thankful to get a decently paid billet, said in his usual quiet way:

"But I thought, Captain Northwood, that you did not intend to dismiss Captain Fletcher? No business of mine, of course, but that is how I understood matters."

"You understood my intentions rightly, Captain Marshall, but Captain Fletcher has chosen to resign and throw the *Alastor* on my hands at a moment's notice. Here is his letter and a copy of his wages account, which he accepts as correct. As long as Captain Fletcher has got *his* cheque, it appears that the crew's wages and all other accounts can be settled by someone else! Luckily I have had lots of experience of that sort of thing, so I

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shall be able to manage all right. Since Captain Fletcher is in such a hurry to go, I am willing to oblige him and get him signed off without delay."

Marshall looked over the papers before him and said casually to Fletcher :

" I suppose you know that Northwood and Son are paying you and your brother the highest scale of wages known in the port of Singapore ? "

Fletcher grunted a surly assent, and shifted about uneasily on his feet until the necessary formalities were accomplished, whereupon Captain Northwood very unceremoniously told him to go away, as nobody wanted to have anything further to say to him. Fletcher went.

" Dear me ! What does this mean ? " inquired Marshall. " You have been so exceedingly generous to that man in every way, that it is difficult to understand his unjustifiable conduct. By the way, who are you thinking of putting in his place ? When you are thinking the thing over, you might consider Captain Lewis. I am afraid Jack Lewis is in very poor circumstances through no fault of his own, and he has his wife and family to support. I believe him to be an honest and competent man."

" Just the very man I want. I'll send for him at once ! "

So saying, Captain Northwood returned to his office and despatched a tamby to find Lewis at McAlister's.

Lewis's history was a sad one in its way, but nothing very extraordinary. He had served a Chinese owner for a few years, and being a careful man, had saved money and married. Then came the evil day when the newly-appointed *chinchew*, or Chinese supercargo, wanted to overload the ship to such a dangerous extent that Lewis, who as captain was responsible for everything, could not possibly allow it. The *chinchew*, who was a nephew of the owner, got into a violent rage with Lewis over this affair and persuaded his uncle to dismiss the captain immediately.

Lewis had tried in vain to get another command. He

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had been for a few voyages as mate, in order to earn a little money, but the local skippers didn't care about a mate who had been a captain, so that he was out of employment and sinking deeper into the most hopeless poverty when Captain Northwood sent for him.

He could scarce believe his senses when he was offered the command of the *Alastor*.

"That's all right!" said Captain Northwood. "Wait for me on board the *Alastor* to-morrow morning, and I'll take you over the ship. You will sign on later in the day. I shan't want you any more to-day, so you had best make use of your last holiday. By the way, you had better go to Mr. Arratoon and draw a month's pay in advance."

Lewis drew his cash, went round to a certain store to buy some things which were sorely needed, and drove off in a gharry to the miserable Chinese shop-house where his wife and his two children were wearing out a friendless, miserable and half-starved existence. Great was the joy in the little family when the father came home so unexpectedly with the wonderful good news. Poor Polly Lewis, once so pretty and now so pinched and wan, laughed and cried in turns as she hugged her Jack and her wee bits of pale children suffering from their unwholesome environments and semi-starvation. Was it possible that they were to get out of this hideous place and to be able to buy some decent clothes and have something to eat besides rice, salt fish and cheap vegetables?

Lewis had brought home a bottle of port with him, some tinned provisions, a cake and some fancy biscuits. On this they made such a feast as the unhappy family had not even dreamed of in their mute misery for months and months past. It was settled between them that Polly Lewis should hire a gharry the next day and take her children with her to Tanjong Katong. If she could find a cheap bungalow on the seashore she was to take it at once. The sooner the children exchanged the fetid atmo-

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sphere in which they were dwindling away for the sea-breezes of Tanjong Katong the better.

These Lewis people had nothing but praise and gratitude for the Northwoods. "People tell such awful lies about them," said the *Alastor's* new captain. "I should have gone to Captain Northwood long ago about our troubles if I hadn't been scared away from him with tales of his being such a brute, and they said the son was worse than his father. Why Captain Northwood sends for me and offers me the same pay as the Fletchers get, the highest pay of the port, as quietly and simply as possible, just as if he was doing nothing at all. He didn't try to beat my wages down or bully me because we were starving—like some others have done. It was Captain Northwood himself who offered me a month's pay in advance, because I suppose somebody must have given him a hint of our condition. And young Northwood is as nice a lad as I've ever seen. He *can't* be either a bully or a blackguard. Anyone can see he hasn't got it in him!"

Next day Koh Say Kiat came in with the news that James Fletcher and Bird were going the round of the Chinese merchants of Market Street and Boat Quay to canvass them for their support for a new steamship service for the Moluccas trade. They promised immediately to put on a much finer and faster steamer than the *Alastor* at reduced rates and to break up the Northwood monopoly.

So *that* was the explanation of the mystery!

Koh Say Kiat got orders to keep closely in touch with the situation and to report everything. The clever, quiet Chinaman nodded his head and disappeared.

Captain Northwood said rather bitterly: "We can trust that Chinaman absolutely. He is a bit different to Washington Clarke, Bird, James Fletcher and a few others I could name, who are proud to call themselves Englishmen!"

Two days later, a bold advertisement in the *Straits*

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Times notified that the fine, fast steamer *Maharajah*, Captain Craster, had been chartered by Captain James Fletcher and Partners from the Golconda Company, Limited, for the Moluccas trade, and was now ready to load for those ports.

The Northwoods were now further enlightened as to the situation, but could not find the key to the enigma. Where had James Fletcher got his money from? Who were his backers?

Johnnie said that he thought that Captain Hardy was in it, and if so, the menace to their trade was considerable, for the old sailor had money and influence, besides an intimate knowledge of the trade. Then it suddenly occurred to Johnnie that Van Papendrecht was in it also. He recalled the reserved, half-unfriendly attitude of Cornelius of late. Certainly the Dutchman was in it.

"I believe you are right!" said Captain Northwood. "We shall have to be very careful what we are doing. It's a bit awkward that the *Maharajah* happens to be a fine new vessel, steaming a good two or three knots faster than the *Alastor*. The enemy has got the heels of us!"

Koh Say Kiat came in to report that Bird was offering to take a considerable quantity of cargo for Menado and Gorontalo, and suggested booking it for the *Alastor* at a lower freight. This looked like good advice, but Johnnie objected. "Let Koh Say Kiat work the rate down as much as he can, but let Fletcher and his lot actually book the cargo. While the *Maharajah* goes out of the direct route, and is delayed in the Celebes ports, I can sail direct for Ternate in the *Alastor* and work round Van Papendrecht and the Capitan China." Fletcher, by going to the Celebes, would sacrifice the immense advantage he had in the superior speed of the *Maharajah*, and give the Northwoods time in which to work. This Captain Northwood thought was the right view of the position, and Koh Say Kiat had his instructions accordingly.

The wily Chinaman thereupon started in bidding briskly

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for the Celebes cargo at constantly dropping rates, to the great delight of the Chinese shippers, until he reduced the freight from a dollar to fifty cents per picul—when he suddenly went out of the market. Fletcher and Bird found that their next offer of forty-five cents was immediately taken, and that they were saddled with the Celebes cargo at fifty-five per cent. less than they expected—a result at which they felt considerably “sold.” However, it was a commencement of business, and it looked well to see the *Maharajah*, lying close to the *Alastor*, surrounded with lighters full of cargo.

Johnnie Northwood happened to meet his friend Smith of the Golconda Company, and said: “So you have chartered one of your best steamers to run against us!”

“Can’t help it, dear boy!” replied the genial Smith. “We’ve got to employ our ships so as to make ’em pay, and we seldom get such a rattling good charter as we have made for the *Maharajah*. Money safe? Of course we saw to *that*! The first month’s hire was paid on signature of the charter-party, oddly enough by a cheque signed by Mrs. Georgina Fletcher, the wife of Captain John Fletcher, of your steamer the *Brunei*. Jolly nice woman, Mrs. Fletcher—quite charming. I met her the other day and was struck with her nice, unaffected manners!”

Here was news indeed! So John Fletcher was in it too! “Wonder who else is in this conspiracy,” thought Johnnie to himself.

His father was much put out on hearing the latest development. John Fletcher was an excellent captain, whom he liked very much, and who was indebted to him for many a friendly service. There had never been any difference between them, and it was really very disheartening to find John Fletcher backing up his brother with money made in the Northwood service. Of course, John Fletcher would have to be got rid of directly the *Brunei*, then about due, should arrive in Singapore harbour.

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So Northwood senior selected Captain Hawkins to succeed John Fletcher. Barely had the *Brunei* come to anchor when Hawkins was on board with an official letter from Northwood and Son, ordering John Fletcher to hand over the command of his steamer to the bearer.

Captain John went straightway to the office, and protested vigorously against his dismissal and the manner of it. He explained that for private reasons he kept his banking account in his wife's name, and asserted that his brother James had beguiled her into signing the cheque for the charter money of the *Maharajah* without his knowledge or consent. This perhaps was literally true, but a few pointed questions from Captain Northwood resulted in answers which clearly proved that John Fletcher was a party to his brother's scheme. He urged that he had strongly disapproved of the whole affair, but, as he himself expressed it, he had been "humbugged into a thoroughly rotten thing by his brother."

No doubt this was the case, but it was intolerable that Captain John should supply Captain James with funds to destroy the Moluccas trade of Northwood and Son. Even the long-suffering Captain Northwood was beginning to realize that he could have too much of the Washington Clarke business.

John Fletcher felt his dismissal very keenly, the more especially as he saw that Captain Northwood shared his regret sincerely. John Fletcher was really a fine fellow, and shook hands most heartily with both the Northwoods on leaving their office.

Koh Say Kiat now brought word that things were not running at all smoothly with what he called the *Maharajah Kongsis*. It was a fact that Captain Craster, the commander of the boat, resented the constant interference of James Fletcher and Bird in the loading of the steamer. There had been a violent quarrel, too, between John and James Fletcher. The charterers of the *Maharajah* were already at their wits' end for ready cash, and

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it was no secret that they were anxiously waiting for the arrival of Captain Hardy in the *Victory*, now long overdue, to supply them with the necessary funds.

During this crisis the old *Victory* sailed into Singapore harbour, a floating wreck. Half her spars were gone, her sails were in tatters, and her pumps were sending big jets of clear water into the sea. Her ensign was half-masted—a melancholy symbol of death! Caught in a tremendous storm off the Sangir Islands, brave old Hardy had worked his ship like the seaman he was. During the height of the tempest he was struck on the head by the loose end of a flying rope, which had somehow got adrift. The injury did not seem very serious at the time, but after the Captain had saved his ship and had got into fine weather, blood-poisoning set in, and carried him off in a very short time. A little medical attendance would no doubt have saved his life, but as things happened Hardy was dead, and buried at sea.

Captain Northwood and his son heard the news with infinite regret. Mrs. Hardy refused to receive Mrs. Northwood when she called upon her, an incident which affected the family at Woodleigh acutely. Captain Northwood bitterly blamed Shelby for not having included the late Captain Hardy in their combination, as he had promised. Had Shelby been less greedy and more honourable in this matter, what a train of trouble and disaster would have been avoided!

To the "Partners" or the "Conspirators," as Johnnie Northwood called them, the death of Captain Hardy was a terrible blow. However, they managed, by dint of freights paid in advance and various other means, to scrape enough money together to pay for their coals and other disbursements.

Meanwhile the *Alastor* had loaded a full cargo, of which no one could positively foretell the destination. Every package was shipped by the owners and all outside cargo was refused.

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An hour after the *Maharajah* left with a half cargo for Menado and Gorontalo at very low freights, Northwood and Son cleared the *Alastor* for Ternate direct.

After a fine and uneventful passage, Johnnie once more found himself at Ternate. His first care was to seek out Cornelius van Papendrecht, who received him with that odd mixture of shyness and suspicion which grated so much on his nerves.

Johnnie lost no time in making the position clear to Van Papendrecht. The action of the Fletchers and of Bird were briefly laid before him. He was told all about the charter of the *Maharajah*, and lastly of the death of Captain Hardy.

Van Papendrecht simply shivered in his fat way when he heard that Hardy was dead. "I will have nothing more to do with it!" he said.

So Cornelius *was* in it, as Northwood had anticipated. The two men discussed the situation for half-an-hour, at the end of which time it was decided that Northwood should remain in Ternate as the guest of Cornelius, while Captain Lewis took the *Alastor* to Amboina, with letters advising Shelby of the situation.

During the next few days Northwood led a peaceful, but sorrowful life. He had memories of Ternate which were sad and sweet. But his heart burned within him when he found out how vilely his relations with Coralie van Swoll had been misrepresented, for no better purposes than revenge and greed. Dimly and slowly Cornelius grasped the facts about his unhappy sister, and being a generous man at heart, he acknowledged the wrong he had done to Northwood and swore that he would redress it.

Ten days after Northwood had arrived, the *Maharajah* steamed gaily into Ternate. As Johnnie watched her from the verandah, he thought what a bonnie, up-to-date steamer she was, with her straight stem, her pole masts, and her general saucy, business-like air of a modern packet doing her twelve knots without an effort. Captain Craster was

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evidently a man who loved his ship. The *Maharajah* was smartly painted up, and her brass-work was burnished like gold. Certainly the *Maharajah* was a bit of a contrast to the ancient *Alastor*, with her old-fashioned clipper bow, her great, overhanging elliptic stern, and her big masts and spars.

However, Northwood had to turn his mind to matters of much greater importance. As soon as certain formalities were over, Captain James Fletcher would have to be confronted. It had already been arranged between Cornelius and Johnnie that the latter should do the fighting required.

Presently both James Fletcher and Bird were shown into Van Papendrecht's office. They came in with an air of easy assurance until they perceived, in the carefully shaded light of the apartment, John Dillon Northwood, junior, sitting cheek by jowl with Cornelius van Papendrecht. They started back as if they had seen the Original Serpent himself, ready to fix his fangs into them. How Johnnie Northwood happened to be there they could not understand. The essentially warlike young man, however, lost no time in making his attack. He said, in a deadly earnest way, to James Fletcher: "Your game is up. Here is an agreement binding Cornelius van Papendrecht to me for three years, which you can see if you like. As for your intended cruise to the New Guinea coast—that's all off, and is now *my* business. The *Alastor* is either at Amboina or Banda, and I defy you to get an ounce of cargo from those islands! Take my advice, and get back to Singapore by the shortest route. The *Maharajah* is a jolly expensive ship, and the sooner you get rid of her the better. Now, please, go away! I have had quite enough of you!"

James Fletcher fairly reeled under this attack. He blurted out: "But I'm a ruined man, Mr. Northwood! You have ruined me and my brother and the whole lot of us!"

Johnnie Northwood pulled himself together for his last broadside and fairly roared out: "You, James Fletcher,

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are a fool and a humbug, repeating the lies pumped into you by that creature Bird at your elbow. Ask your brother John whether he will trust me or whether he will trust you! You know perfectly well that you have yourself to thank for what has happened. You and Bird have both been in my employ and a nice use you have made of the opportunities I have given you. You best know, the pair of you, what return you have made for my constant kindness to you. Get away, you damned, disastrous, back-biting scoundrels, and be hanged to you!"

The wretched pair slunk out of the place, went on board the *Maharajah*, and steamed her back to Singapore an empty ship, amidst the coarse and constantly reiterated congratulations of Captain Craster, who hated Fletcher and Bird with a great loathing. When these two men were not writhing under the lash of Craster, they spent their time in bitterly cursing each other.

The expedition proved to be a perfectly ruinous affair, and the "partnership" went to pieces amidst a variety of sounds which were anything but harmonious. Bird, having at last realized that the Northwoods were beyond the reach of his spite, and that no shipowner or other person in Singapore had any use for him, went back to Australia by the next steamer. James Fletcher, finding himself in precisely the same unenviable position as Bird, shipped himself home to England. Captain Northwood would fain have reinstated Captain John Fletcher in the command of the *Brunei*, but that he did not care to dismiss Hawkins, who seemed a decent man. However, it happened that an Assistant Manager was wanted at the Tanjong Pagar Docks, and Captain Northwood, being an influential shareholder, secured the place for John Fletcher, who was very thankful to him for a well-paid billet, which suited him better than the command of any steamer.

In due course Johnnie Northwood arrived in the *Alastor* with a large and very valuable cargo. He had won the tug-of-war!

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE NEWS WHICH AWAITED JOHN DILLON NORTHWOOD ON HIS ARRIVAL AT SINGAPORE

WHILE young Northwood was away on his cruise to Ternate, certain significant events had occurred. Firstly, a serious fire had taken place in the buildings at Battery Road. A pan of Scorchers' Patent Metal had boiled over, and running along the floor had set the spirits ablaze. At one time it looked as if the whole of the buildings and their contents would be destroyed, but the fire brigade had managed to save the offices and the godowns in which the sago-flour was stored. The whole front of the building, the spirit-stores, and the godowns reserved for gums and spices were all in blackened ruins.

The spirit-room and stores had been carefully specified in Northwood and Son's insurance policies, so the companies interested made no difficulty about settling claims. It seemed rather a pity that so much valuable property in the shape of gums and spices had been burned, while huge piles of sago-flour, which could easily have been spared, were left intact.

Somehow or another, Johnnie Northwood disliked having to walk through ruined walls and pillars to get to his office. There seemed to him something ominous in these roofless and shattered buildings, through which he had to pass so many times each day. Perhaps this melancholy tinge was imparted to his feelings by the tremendous and unexpected news that Morison, Wallis and Co. had suspended payment and that Lewis Wallis

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had been arrested on a charge of fraud in connection with the failure of his firm. Wallis was now out on bail, and going to his office just as usual. He seemed to be in excellent spirits, and made light of the charge of fraud, which he said was perfectly groundless. Of course the "corner" in sago-flour was entirely upset by recent events, but Wallis claimed that Captain Northwood had practically saved the situation.

As he expressed it to Johnnie: "Your father has done wonders! No other man but he could have done anything. Forty-eight hours after my firm had suspended payment, your father had all the Chinese assembled in your office, and explained to them that the 'corner' was a thing of the past, although it had still four months to run under the contracts signed by us. He offered each Chinaman a cheque for so much, according to the size of his contract, to cancel it. Such is the influence your father has over these people that every Chinaman took the cheque that was given him and cancelled his contract without a murmur. So that Northwood and Son are relieved of the necessity of taking over the huge arrivals of sago now coming in, and it is once more an open market. Everyone is talking of your father's wonderful management in this case. As for me, you will see that my London friends will pull me through. It's not likely that an old house such as Morison, Wallis and Co. will be allowed to come to the ground. And the charge of fraud is sheer nonsense!"

Johnnie consulted with his father and Busoni concerning the position in which they were placed by the failure of Morison, Wallis and Co. He found them both absolutely tranquil and even hopeful as to the ultimate result. Captain Northwood was simply delighted with the negotiations which had got them out of the "sago corner." Busoni was enthusiastic about the state of affairs, which, according to him, could not be better.

Johnnie called on his bankers and found that the credit of Northwood and Son, so far from being impaired, was

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much strengthened by the recent crisis. His father's triumph over the Chinese difficulty, and his own striking success in smashing the "Partners" at one blow, seemed to demonstrate beyond all doubt that Northwood and Son understood their business. Their bankers informed Johnnie that his firm could have practically as much money as they wanted, which was particularly gratifying, because they did not want to borrow a single sixpence at the moment.

Still, when Johnnie Northwood went over the question of the "corner" with Busoni, the deeper he probed it the less satisfactory did the outlook appear to him. Although Busoni could not grasp the fact, Johnnie saw that they would have to replace Morison, Wallis and Co. in the huge Liverpool market. Busoni had committed Northwood and Son so far in Liverpool that it was practically impossible to do otherwise than carry on an exceedingly risky business. Captain Northwood had deliberately encouraged Busoni in his efforts to "steady the market" out of loyalty to his Chinese friends, and Lewis Wallis, by no means discouraged by his difficulties, incessantly urged further speculations in Liverpool. Everybody in Singapore thought that by a singularly able move Captain Northwood had extricated his firm from the "sago corner," but Johnnie Northwood saw, to his horror, that Northwood and Son were *not* out of the "corner"; but, on the contrary, were drifting into endless complications at the prompting of Lewis Wallis! Of course, if Lewis Wallis's wealthy relatives in London chose to come to his assistance, all would be well. But, supposing the amount demanded was so large as to overcome sentiment, what would be the upshot? Johnnie fairly shuddered. It meant a felon's prison to Lewis Wallis, and possible ruin to the firm of Northwood and Son.

Although it seemed quite a foregone conclusion that Wallis's powerful London friends would find the money

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required to pay off the banks and other creditors, the charge of fraud, of which he stood accused, was sufficiently serious. It appeared that, apart from the "sago corner," Wallis had involved his firm in a series of absolutely reckless speculations in pepper, which ran into such huge sums of money, that the banks required him to hypothecate his stocks of this spice and other produce as security for his constantly swelling overdrafts. Having started some very expensive plantations of tapioca simultaneously with his other great ventures, Wallis was charged with having hypothecated the same stocks of pepper to two different banks, in order to provide funds for his plantations, which had swallowed up something like half a million dollars.

The Morison, Wallis and Co. crisis extended over an indefinite period, during which Northwood and Son were left to "steady the market" in sago-flour. Johnnie Northwood again wished that sago-flour was not an article of such enormous bulk. He particularly wished that he had not started to "corner" a product which could be produced with a facility which was simply disgusting! Singularly enough, the British Patent Sugar Company, which had driven Northwood and Son into the famous "corner," now supported them most loyally, and facilitated matters to such an extent as to relieve Johnnie of much of his anxiety.

In the meantime the Borneo trade was rolling in its accustomed profits, and the Moluccas trade, in spite of Shelby's enormous demand, was at last sending money to the parent firm in Singapore. So, after all, the mercantile sky seemed serene as far as Northwood and Son were concerned.

CHAPTER XX

SOCIETY DOINGS

HALCYON days were now the lot of the Northwoods for quite a long period. Sweet is the calm after the storm!

Mrs. Northwood, having both her husband and son at home, launched them into a sea of gaieties. She entertained people to tiffin-parties, dinner-parties, and even breakfast-parties, because she never gave a dance without asking people from a distance to stay at Woodleigh for a day or two. Picnics at Ayer Manis were often renewed with never-failing success. When His Excellency the Governor of Labuan arrived on a visit to the metropolis of the Straits, he was invited by His Excellency of Singapore to stay at Government House. The Governor of Labuan, however, pleaded that he had already accepted an invitation from Captain Northwood to make Woodleigh his home during his stay in Singapore. Whereupon Mrs. Skinner said, with her usual good-nature :

“ Now that that Northwood woman has got a real live Governor staying at her place, there’s no standing her. She’s killing the wretched man with dinner-parties. His Excellency indeed! She had better look after that precious son of hers, one would think. He’s turning out a nice young man, isn’t he? First he carried on anyhow with poor Clara Campbell, and then it was Mary Hardy, and you know that awful story about that unfortunate Miraflores girl, who had to be sent to Malacca? Don’t tell me there was nothing wrong! Malacca is a mighty convenient place for some people, nobody knows what

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happens there! Now he's after the married women! Pity that that silly George Dashwood doesn't die of something sudden. It might give young Northwood a chance of making an honest woman of Flora! And if Caroline Northwood thinks I'm going to dance attendance on her second-class dinners, while Skinner and I am shut out of the dances and dinners she gives to her "swell" friends, who laugh at her up their sleeves; she's mightily mistaken!"

Dr. Macleod tried to pacify the irate Mrs. Skinner, without any other result than that of getting into trouble himself. He was told that he was a monster, and accused vehemently of leading Johnnie Northwood into vice—a proceeding which appeared to be absolutely superfluous. The worthy doctor laughed in his usual good-tempered way, and betook himself to the bedside of one of his patients.

Gossip of this kind about the Northwoods was by no means rare in certain circles. Meanwhile, they had as many invitations as they could possibly accept from some of the best people in the island, and on rare occasions they were even admitted within the sacred precincts of Government House itself.

Captain Northwood, thinking it might interest his guest the Governor to see his friend Chassepôt's really beautiful plantation, took him there by arrangement on one fine Sunday morning. The old Frenchman received his visitors very cordially. True, he insisted on addressing Captain Northwood as *Monsieur le Marquis de Carabas*, but, for that matter, he never called his own wife anything else but *Madame de Quincampoix*, a proceeding which visibly annoyed her extremely.

After an exceedingly enjoyable morning in the open air Chassepôt seated his guests before a really splendid tiffin. The old Frenchman's wines were of the finest. During the meal he said to the Governor: "Your Excellency, I am always please to entertain the friend of

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Monsieur le Marquis! It cost me more of two hundred dollar each time, but I do not care!"

After making this rather awkward little speech, he explained to the Governor that the *Marquis de Carabas* was a nobleman, who after rolling in riches, which he flung about with profligate profusion, was suddenly reduced to a state of penniless destitution. "So I always call him *le Marquis de Carabas!*" continued Chassepôt most genially, while he pointed to Captain Northwood. "It cannot last! Some day will be a tremendous *krach*, and my friend *le marquis* will still be *M. le Marquis de Carabas. N'est-ce pas, Madame de Quincampoix?*"

Driving home, the Governor said to Captain Northwood: "Your French friend gives a delightful *déjeuner à la fourchette*, but he is something of an original, isn't he?"

"He's a fine old planter and a decent fellow at heart, but I've never heard him say a good word of anybody or anything. I only wish he wouldn't bully that pretty wife of his so outrageously, and he leads his sons a pretty awful life of it. However, as a planter, he is simply splendid, and he can call me the marquis as long as he likes. Johnnie enjoys shooting over his estate, and I would forgive old Chassepôt a lot more than his chaff for his kindness to my son!"

Shortly after this, the Governor left for Labuan in the s.s. *Brunei*, and life at Woodleigh resumed its normal aspect.

Another social function which followed shortly afterwards was a gala dinner given by the Valbergs, who entertained very profusely.

Mr. Valberg assembled the bigwigs round him at the head of the table, while Johnnie was relegated with the other young people to the further end of it, which was presided over by Mrs. Valberg. A perfectly sumptuous dinner proceeded its usual way until the hostess got absent-minded and reminiscent. Fixing her glittering eyes,

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first on Johnnie and then on the chandelier, she said to it in her penetrating falsetto :

“So you have been leading a life of adventure, young man! Fighting pirates like your father! Must be in the blood, I suppose! Let me see. Who was it said the Northwoods were so piratical themselves, that they must fight somebody, even if it was only other pirates? I remember he said the Northwoods should adopt the skull and crossbones as the family crest, because they would be what the French call *armes parlantes*. It sounds rather like one of the clever things *you* say about the Northwoods, Valentine!”

Poor young Valberg, in dire confusion, indignantly denied having said anything of the kind. Johnnie, however, made no effort to conceal his intense amusement over this little complication, which was heightened by the innocent amazement of Mrs. Valberg at the hilarity caused by her remarks.

Her unhappy son took the thing much too tragically; he was of a sensitive nature, and had inherited a fair dose of the family absent-mindedness. He sank into a brown study, and brooded over thoughts which were evidently of a singularly unpleasant nature.

The dinner came almost to its close quietly enough, but with the dessert a fresh incident occurred. Mrs. Valberg asked Johnnie Northwood to partake of some bon-bons in a crystal dish before him, but assuring his hostess that he did not particularly care for sweets, he helped himself to some delicious fruit close at hand. Mrs. Valberg then pressed her bon-bons on Horatio Griffin, a nice young man, whose pink, chubby cheeks announced clearly enough that he had but recently arrived from Home, Sweet Home. Mr. Griffin swallowed some of the proffered sweets, and then, at the urgent solicitation of his hostess, worried down some more of them, though apparently he did not enjoy the bon-bons very much. Still, he was a bashful young fellow, and did his best to

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please Mrs. Valberg and everyone else in such a trifling matter. Finally, even he felt that complaisance could go no further, and politely intimated that he desired no more sweetmeats. Whereupon Mrs. Valberg said very earnestly to the rings on her fingers: "I am so pleased you enjoyed them, Mr. Griffin, because no one else will touch them, and I don't like the look of them myself! But, then, they are quite a novelty, and it is so difficult to find anything new in Singapore. I saw them for the first time in John Small's this morning. They are put up in a large glass bottle and they are called 'Keating's Anthelmintic Bon-bons.' I don't know what anthelmintic is, but, of course, bon-bons are bon-bons all the world over, and so I bought them. Somehow Keating always reminds me of insect-powder. I don't suppose the Keating who makes the anthelmintic bon-bons can be the same person!"

The situation was getting decidedly risky, but it might have been saved had it not been for that riotous and hilarious person, Mr. Ferguson, who simply howled: "Haw! Haw! Haw! This is positively the richest thing I've ever seen! Blest if Mrs. Valberg hasn't filled him up with Keating's Worm Tablets! Haw! Haw! Haw!"

Just then a deep, reverberating bellow from somewhere near the middle of the table announced that Mr. William Wapshot had spotted the joke and was enjoying it immensely. Mrs. Dashwood broke into a peal of clear, ringing laughter, which was highly infectious. Several ladies giggled or indulged in little screams. The confusion was further increased by poor Mr. Griffin staggering to his feet unsteadily. His face, from which every tinge of colour had fled, was as white as the tablecloth. Giving vent to a hollow groan, the unhappy young man upset his chair and a glass of wine, and bolting from the room, vanished into the outer darkness before anyone could stop him.

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During the ensuing uproar, Mrs. Valberg calmly remarked, to an epergne filled with fruit and flowers, that really people had no manners nowadays, and that she had serious doubts concerning Mr. Griffin's mentality. Perhaps there was insanity in the family!

Old Mr. Valberg was sadly put out about the whole affair; while poor Valentine, who had been aroused from his reverie with a vengeance, appeared to be thunderstruck.

Captain Northwood, who was making heroic efforts to suppress a smile, said to his old friend Valberg: "Nonsense! I assure you it will certainly do the young fellow no harm whatever. Come along. Let us have a rubber of whist and think no more about it!"

"Very well!" rejoined Mr. Valberg ruefully; "but I don't suppose Mr. Horatio Griffin will ever dine *here* again!"

After dinner, when many of the guests had betaken themselves to a rubber of bridge, Dr. Macleod met Johnnie in the broad lamp-lit verandah and had a chat with him. On hearing of the skull and crossbones incident the doctor laughed, and said: "You really seem to have had all the fun of the evening at your end of the table." Speaking of a professional visit which he had paid to Government House that day, Dr. Macleod remarked that it lay at a most convenient distance from town. It was not always thus; there was a time when Government House stood on Léonie Hill, considerably further out of town.

According to Dr. Macleod, in the bygone days, when Singapore was ruled by the Honourable East India Company, General Sir Orfeur Cavenagh was Governor of Singapore—a gallant old soldier, who had lost a leg during the last battle which he had fought in India. The missing limb was replaced with soldierly simplicity by a common iron-shod wooden leg, of the old-fashioned Greenwich pensioner type. Sir Orfeur lived with much distinction in his handsome residence on Léonie Hill, until one evening he dined with one of the great Singapore merchants, who

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actually lived in town over his offices—as merchants sometimes did in those ancient times. The festivities at the hospitable merchant's were prolonged until just about daybreak, when His Excellency thought it about time to go home. His syce had thought the same thing previously, and had disappeared with Sir Orfeur's carriage some hours before. Stout Sir Orfeur made nothing of this, and said he would walk home, and started off on foot. Unluckily, however, he had not gone very far—that is to say, he had got near the bridge named after him, when his wooden leg became fixed in a fire-plug which had been carelessly left open. By what particular mischance Sir Orfeur managed to give himself a rotary motion while in this predicament it is hard to say, but it must have made him a little dizzy, for the first citizen to drive into town was greatly surprised to find His Excellency laboriously walking round and round the fire-plug, while his timber leg was literally smoking with long-continued friction. The citizen extricated Sir Orfeur and drove him to Léonie Hill, where he arrived greatly exhausted from the effects of his circular tour.

At the next meeting of Council, the Governor mentioned that, having had occasion recently to ride from town to Government House, he had found the distance to be something enormous and that the fatigue of making the journey on foot was correspondingly great. He therefore told the Council to pass a vote at once for building a new Government House much nearer the town. So the establishment at Léonie Hill was sold, and for the fact that the present palatial Government House is so accessible from town the good people of Singapore have to thank Sir Orfeur Cavenagh.

Dr. Macleod had no sooner finished his story than Mrs. Northwood, who had been an unobserved listener, told him that he ought not to tell such a scandalous anecdote about a distinguished person. She refused to believe a word of it, and said that her husband, although he was

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only a sailor, would be ashamed to spin such a yarn about Government House. Having thoroughly roasted the doctor to her own satisfaction, she told Johnnie to order their carriage, as it was high time for everybody to be off home. The departure of the Northwoods was the signal of the break-up of the party. Every one of the guests assured Mr. and Mrs. Valberg that they had enjoyed themselves thoroughly, which was probably the case.

The next evening there was a fancy dress ball given at the Town Hall by the ladies of Singapore. This was quite a brilliant affair. A profusion of lights lit up the portraits of departed Governors and the most polished of floors. The regimental band in the gallery played perfectly bewitching music for the scores of gaily-clad dancers, who whirled each other joyously through space. Pierrots and pierrettes, paysans and paysannes, kings and queens, footed it merrily with soldiers, sailors, and the daintiest of fish-wives and flower-girls. Naturally there was a comic policeman, and a clown who tried desperately hard to be funny. A very handsome German lady made a great sensation by coming as an officer of an Uhlan regiment. She looked splendid in her adaptation of the uniform, but her skirts were really so scanty! As a matter of fact, they scarce existed, but then she had such dainty boots with jingling spurs.

Johnnie went in the uniform of the Pontifical Zouaves, an actual uniform worn by the gallant owner, the French Consul, Armand Duplessis de Belleville, during the battle of Castelfidardo. It suited Johnnie splendidly and was very comfortable to wear. Mrs. Dashwood was delightful in a *costume poudré*, but she was just a little too much like an animated picture, and suffered in contrast with Clara Campbell, whose superb youth triumphed in some cheap little gipsy-girl dress, which became her admirably.

Johnnie had seen very little indeed of Miss Campbell since her arrival in Singapore, and now it seemed that he could not have too much of her society. They danced

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together repeatedly, and the gipsy girl proved to be a sad flirt. During one of the intervals he took her out to one of the cool side verandahs, but he had barely seated himself by her when she was claimed by a tall, gawky, dissipated-looking young fellow, with a most forbidding countenance, who was dressed as a brigand, and who did not condescend to take the slightest notice of the Pontifical Zouave. Johnnie flushed angrily at this discourtesy. But just at that moment Dr. Macleod, in Windsor uniform, stood before him, and, shaking his hand, said: "You mustn't fly the Jolly Roger to-night, my lad. Remember Mrs. Valberg! You might have come as pirate, all the same, though you make a very handsome Zouave. So Mr. Mudgrove has cut you dead and taken away your pretty partner? Well, he has some right to resent your attentions to Miss Campbell, if it happens that he intends to marry her. Mudgrove is a thorough bad lot, who will make Clara Campbell, or any other woman, miserably unhappy. Why don't you cut him out? It's easy to see that the young lady, who is no fool, by the way, will be overjoyed if you save her from such an evil fate. She is penniless, as you know, and dependent on relatives who want to get rid of her at the very first opportunity. If I were a rich young man like you, I don't think I should take long to send Mudgrove about his unholy business, but I really don't know what young men are made of nowadays! They seem to think of nothing but money! Now when I was your age a beautiful girl weighed in my estimation infinitely more than all the filthy dross in the world, though I had precious little of it myself, I can tell you. Now I had an idea that my friend Johnnie was a little above the ruck of the young men of the day. . . ."

"Oh, do be quiet, Doctor! I've been dancing all night and I'm as dry as a chip. Come along and let us have a drink!"

The two men walked to the front verandah, where a rosetted steward offered them some champagne-cup,

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which proved to be mostly soda-water. However, as Dr. Macleod observed, it was wet and cold, and could be guaranteed to refresh the thirsty dancers who came crowding to the bar without intoxicating them if they drank a bucket of it.

The ladies of Singapore had arranged a delightful entertainment, but they had altogether under-estimated the amount of champagne which a hundred or so of dancing men can consume during a long night in a tropical climate. It was said that the Committee had decided that it was impossible for any number of people to drink more than a dozen of champagne, especially if mixed with plenty of soda-water. Besides, there were ices and coffee and sandwiches and things. What more could anybody want ?

Presently Mudgrove turned up with some especial friends of his own set. They found the champagne-cup most unsatisfactory, and said so without the slightest scruple. Mudgrove demanded a whisky and soda, and was horrified to learn that the ladies of the committee had forgotten to order any whisky !

"Here's a nice go !" he observed, consulting his watch ; "and the bar of the 'Europe' is closed by this time ! What shall we do ?"

"It's all right, Muddy !" said a young man with a red nose. "I've got lots of whisky and soda in my digs at the hotel, and I told 'em to send up some anchovy toast before they shut up. I vote we get !"

"That's the best news I've heard for a long time !" rejoined Mudgrove cheerfully. "Let's hook it sharp ! What about a game of poker ?"

One of the group ejaculated "Hooray !" another said that dancing was "all rot," and a group of about half a dozen men headed by Mudgrove hurriedly left the Town Hall in search of more congenial surroundings.

Dr. Macleod said, as he nudged Johnnie's elbow : "We may be thankful that we haven't many like that

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lot in Singapore. They are off to drink and gamble until broad daylight. You can see exactly how much Mudgrove thinks of Clara Campbell when there's a chance of whisky and poker before him!"

Johnnie Northwood left the verandah feeling and looking distinctly unhappy. His programme reminded him that Mrs. Dashwood had given him the next waltz, so he sought out that fair lady, who was now very bright and animated and looking absolutely lovely. She was a bit extra *décolletée* perhaps, but that was a detail which a young bachelor is not likely to criticize too unfavourably. Exactly how it happened, Johnnie had not the slightest idea. He danced a couple of quadrilles with matrons to whom he was indebted for sundry invitations, and he scrambled through a polka with Miss McWhirter, a wealthy but exceedingly bony Scottish spinster, "who could neither trot nor gallop" as one of the gentlemen present gracefully expressed it. But invisible bonds seemed to hold him back from Clara Campbell. He found himself floating through the very last waltz with Mrs. Dashwood as daylight streamed into the ball-room.

When they got downstairs, Johnnie found that his syce, like Sir Orfeur Cavenagh's, had got tired of waiting and made himself scarce. George Dashwood had gone home in a gharry shortly after midnight. Mrs. Dashwood said, "You can't walk three miles in that uniform of yours in broad daylight. I'll drive you up the Orchard Road and set you down near the gates of Woodleigh."

As they drove off, Johnnie could not help noticing that a group of people in various gay costumes on the Town Hall steps exchanged significant glances.

The young man found his mother waiting eagerly for him in the great back verandah. The huge *waringin* tree was a mass of bright green foliage gilded with the rays of the morning sun and merry with flocks of birds flying about in all directions. Everything seemed cool and sweet after the heated ball-room.

Society Doings

“Your father isn’t back from his ride yet,” said his mother as she kissed him. “How tired you must be. Sit down and drink your pepper-pot, and be off to bed for a little sleep!”

Mrs. Northwood was one of the subscribers to the ball, but, like her husband, she thought a quiet evening at home and a good sleep more enjoyable than a long night in fancy dress. So, having put down his pepper-pot—a decoction chiefly composed of pepper and chillies, and about as pungent as anything on this earth can be—he retired with tears in his eyes to get some sleep.

Pepper-pot in those days was a sovereign specific after “a big night.” It certainly clears the head and comforts the stomach to an amazing degree, but in these degenerate days when Indian cookery has almost disappeared from Singapore, pepper-pot is a thing of the past. It wants a real Indian artist to make it for one thing. How many Singaporeans of the present day have tasted Indian gram-fed mutton, not to mention a score of other Indian delicacies?

CHAPTER XXI

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

THE turn of the tide commenced with a dispute between Johnnie Northwood and Jock Baxter, Surveyor to Lloyd's Register. Honest Jock is dead and gone this many a year, but there was a day when no man was better known in Singapore shipping circles. In private life he was said to be of a very kindly disposition, but as he lived a quiet and retired life few enjoyed his friendship. Officially Jock was a fair terror! He had a way of growling and snapping at shipowners which was the result of long practice, and inspired them with a salutary fear of Lloyd's Register of Shipping and of their Surveyor, Mr. Jock Baxter.

Jock had a little bit of an office in Battery Road, almost opposite Northwood and Son's buildings. When H.M.S. *Bacchante* was due at Singapore with the Royal middies on board, a great display of loyalty prevailed, and decorations and festivities were the order of the day. Young Northwood was charged by the Committee of which he was a member to see that Battery Road was suitably decorated, and to raise subscriptions for that purpose. Johnnie visited the redoubtable Jock, to beg of him some small contribution towards decorating Battery Road on the occasion of the visit of our two young princes.

"What!" roared Jock, perfectly blue with rage. "Money for decorations? Na! na! I'll do my own decoratin'! I'll hing up a couple of young shairks, one on each side of the door. Just you leave me to mind my own decoratin' and good mornin' to ye!"

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As Jock Baxter was quite capable of doing as he said he would, Johnnie was much relieved when the day came to find that no young sharks dangled in front of the Surveyor's office. Perhaps there were none to be had at the moment.

Captain Northwood was away on a trip to Borneo when the trouble took place with Jock Baxter.

There was a great demand for petroleum at the time in the Moluccas. Shelby had made good his boast that he would monopolize this very important business in his region. He was now selling the oil at a profit of something like one hundred per cent., and the only trouble was to keep him supplied with sufficient quantities of it. To this end it had been decided to load the *Ceylon* with a full cargo of American kerosene.

Jock Baxter had been looking round the *Ceylon* on various occasions, and it was understood that he was completely satisfied with the condition of the vessel, which was first-class in every way. No sooner was she loaded and ready for sea, however, than Mr. Baxter ordered the captain to discharge the cargo in his after-holds into lighters, as he wished to examine the ship's stern-post.

Now the Surveyor had had every opportunity of examining this part of the ship before she commenced loading. To discharge some thousands of cases of oil, just in order to put them back again, seemed to be a most grievous and ruinous proceeding, involving such delay and expense as appeared intolerable to Northwood. Had his father been in Singapore the matter would probably have been arranged without much difficulty, but an angry scene, in which Northwood accused Baxter of caprice and neglect of his duty, ended in the old man saying, in his usual abrupt way: "Ye'll get no insurance on either ship or cargo until you do as I tell ye! Good mornin'!"

Surely enough Northwood found it impossible to get a single policy on either the hull or cargo of the *Ceylon* while she lay under the ban of Jock Baxter! After a

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consultation with Captain Watson and the ship's officers, who all declared her to be fit for any voyage and that they would be responsible for her safety, Northwood determined to defy Jock Baxter and send the *Ceylon* to sea uninsured. He went on board to despatch her for Amboina. A lot of money had been spent on the barque during her stay in Singapore, and Captain Watson declared with much pride that she was as strong and well found a vessel as any sailor could wish to see. As to the ship and cargo being at owner's risk, that was a mere detail of which Watson and his officers made light. The insurance companies had missed a heavy premium, which would remain in the pockets of Northwood and Son, and so much the better.

Johnnie left the *Ceylon*, and from his boat saw her running merrily out of Singapore harbour under full sail. What a picture she looked! His heart was rent with a pang of envy when he thought that he could not sail in her himself. That was the way to go cruising to the Moluccas. It was the real thing!

As the *Ceylon* went flying before the breeze, Johnnie reflected with a certain glow of satisfaction that her cargo would certainly clear a profit of one hundred per cent. on the voyage outwards, and with anything like decent luck she would make another handsome profit on the homeward run. She was a bonnie ship, anyway, but she seemed to be a perfectly lovely packet in the eyes of one of her owners.

One morning, only a fortnight after Johnnie Northwood had despatched the *Ceylon* on her voyage with such high spirits, he was horribly surprised to find Captain Watson and his mates waiting for him in the office. What the demon were they doing there? Their proper position was somewhere half way to Amboina!

Watson soon told his dismal story. The *Ceylon* had made a splendid run until she got on fire off the Java coast and burned to the water's edge. Watson said the

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conflagration was the most magnificent sight he ever hoped to see. The crew had just time to take to the boats and get clear of the blazing ship, but they escaped with nothing more than the clothing in which they stood. Fortunately, the Dutch mail-boat, *Graf van Bylandt*, had been attracted to the spot by the tremendous glare thrown on the sky by the flaming cargo of petroleum, picked up the *Ceylon's* boats, and landed her entire crew early that morning in Singapore.

Johnnie heard this news with something like consternation, although he kept very cool and quiet. The loss of the *Ceylon* and her cargo was a very serious matter. Quite apart from the actual value of the hull and the cargo, a profit of one hundred per cent. on a big petroleum shipment had gone flaming to the skies in this disastrous way, and a most useful ship had been lost just when she was most wanted.

Later in the morning the Moluccas mail, brought by the *Graf van Bylandt*, was delivered. Shelby hated writing letters, but he was a pretty good correspondent, nevertheless, who went straight to the point and did not mince matters. Here are a couple of letters which Northwood received by the Dutch mail-boat :

“ Amboina.

“ Messrs. Northwood and Son, Singapore.

“ DEAR SIRS,

“ We are just completing *Alastor*, and expect to despatch her for Singapore *via* Ternate to-morrow afternoon. She takes a full cargo, which will leave a big profit behind it.

Markets are good. Rice is firm, but we have still a fair stock of it. We are short of kerosene, and hope you have sent us a full cargo per *Ceylon*. Prices are going up all the time, but having driven everyone else out of the market, we are bound to supply the demand or get into serious trouble. People are already asking whether they must

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go to bed at sundown because Northwood and Shelby can't keep sufficient stocks of kerosene in hand.

We are also short of arrack, which is also going well at a big profit. The difficulty is to get enough of this also. Our brand gets more popular every day, and we could sell a whole cargo of it.

" Other details per *Alastor*.

" We are, dear Sirs.

" Yours faithfully,

" NORTHWOOD AND SHELBY."

This letter would have made excellent reading in the usual course, but at the moment it came very ill. Northwood opened the next cover in the hope that it might contain something more soothing. It ran as follows :

" Amboina.

" Messrs. Northwood and Son, Singapore.

" DEAR SIRS,

" A native prahu has just arrived from Ceram with the captain and a few men of the crew of our steamer *Almaheira* on board. The captain reports that his steamer was caught in a storm and went ashore, becoming a total loss—some of the crew are missing and a Dutch gunboat is now leaving for Ceram to search for them. The steamer had discharged a cargo of kerosene and arrack, and was in ballast at the time she went ashore. I have found the *Almaheira* most useful in distributing small cargoes of kerosene and arrack amongst the islands and much regret her loss.

" As she was under the Dutch flag and wholly uninsured, the loss of the *Almaheira* (ex *Coralie van Swoll*, ex *Fairy Queen*) concerns none but ourselves. We wish you would see about replacing her as soon as possible.

" *Alastor* will positively sail to-morrow evening.

" We are, dear Sirs,

" Yours faithfully,

" NORTHWOOD AND SHELBY."

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Northwood read this second letter very attentively and then put it carefully away in his pocket. As Shelby remarked, the loss of the *Almaheira* concerned no one but themselves, and there was no use putting this news on the market at a time when all Singapore was talking of the *Ceylon* disaster. It was truly astonishing that he should receive advices of the loss of two of their ships uninsured on one and the same morning.

Meanwhile Captain Watson was telling the story of his escape from the burning *Ceylon* to various interested listeners at McAlister's, while Jock Baxter was going the round of various owners, enforcing a moral and pointing a tale. To judge by the rolling thunder of Jock's denunciations, delivered with the authority of a prophet of old, his hearers were at liberty to believe that the *Ceylon* had vanished in a perfect hell of flame as an express warning to the profane and ungodly shipowners of Singapore, who had better repent while there yet was time, and acknowledge that there was only one Lloyd's Register, and that Jock Baxter was its prophet.

The *Brunei* and *Alastor* both arrived the next morning, and Johnnie lost no time in going off to the former vessel to meet his father. Although Captain Northwood travelled as a passenger, it was easy to see that he had had something to do with the handling of the steamer, which was loaded quite in the good old-fashioned style. The *Brunei* sat very deep in the water, and her decks were piled up high with cases of rubber and rattans, and simply swarming with passengers. In reply to Johnnie's remonstrances, his father laughed as he admitted that the boarding officer had made some pretty strong remarks on the subject.

"But I think I ought to know my monsoons by this time. The sea was like a sheet of glass the whole way, and, of course, I knew perfectly well that it would be so!"

He fairly whistled when he was told of the loss of the *Ceylon* and her cargo uninsured. "There is nothing like the Borneo trade after all," he said. "That Moluccas

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trade is always going to make a tremendous fortune for us, but it is full of the most ungodly surprises. You had no business to quarrel with Jock Baxter, and still less to send the *Ceylon* away uninsured. What's the good of my making money in Borneo if you throw it away in the Moluccas?"

The other bit of Moluccas news Johnnie reserved for a more convenient and private occasion.

When Captain Northwood had fully mastered all the facts of the position, he decided that there was nothing for it but to load the *Alastor* with kerosene and perhaps some three or four thousand cases of arrack, and send her back to Amboina as soon as possible. Shelby was quite right about the petroleum trade. It would never do to keep the islands short of their only illuminant, and however inconvenient it might be, the general cargo would have to wait for another trip. The loss of the *Ceylon* and *Almaheira* disorganized their plans enormously.

There was no suitable sailing-ship to be bought at the moment. As for the poor old *Victory*, that ancient ship has been so shattered in her last storm that she had been sold at a very low price to the Chinese ship-breakers at Tanjong Rhu, and there was now but little of her left.

The spices brought by the *Alastor* fetched unexpectedly high prices. As a matter of fact, Shelby was getting this market more and more into his hands, so that Northwood and Son were now having less and less competition when they realized their supplies, and were able to put up their prices accordingly.

The *Alastor* was hurried away to sea again without the loss of an hour, and safely reached Amboina with her inflammable cargo just in time to relieve an intolerable situation.

Business ran smoothly with Northwood and Son for a few weeks more, when they had to face a heavier blow than any which had been dealt them hitherto.

Matters had come to a crisis with the affairs of Morison,

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Wallis and Co. Their friends at home were either unable or unwilling to find the very large capital necessary to pay off the banks in full in hard cash. The banks, on their side, appeared more anxious to convict Lewis Wallis of fraud than to come to any settlement with him. They were perfectly convinced that he was guilty of very gross frauds, and may have thought it necessary to procure a conviction in order to put the whole of the banking business of Singapore on a safe and proper basis. Besides, the feeling against Wallis had grown much stronger with time and the banks grew more uncompromising. At last all negotiations were broken off, and from that moment the prosecution of the remaining partner in one of the oldest houses in Singapore was pushed on with great activity.

Finally, the sad day came when Johnnie Northwood went to the Supreme Court to see his friend, a fellow monopolist, stand his trial for fraud.

Poor Wallis, who looked, and indeed was, very ill, was accommodated in a seat within the dock. His London friends had provided ample funds for his defence, and he was assisted by some of the best lawyers of the place. The case was tried before a special jury and lasted two days. As it proceeded it seemed to be made quite clear that Wallis, in order to raise large sums of money of which he was in urgent need, had hypothecated great quantities of produce stored in his godowns to more than one bank as security for advances. To pawn an identical thing to more than one person is, of course, fraud of an indefensible type, and although his lawyers did their best for Lewis Wallis, their efforts were of no avail.

It was a glaring, sultry afternoon when the jury, after retiring for a few minutes, filed back into their places. In reply to the usual question, the foreman declared that they found the prisoner guilty! Their verdict was unanimous.

The Chief Justice made the few remarks on the case,

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unavoidable on such an occasion, and sentenced Lewis Wallis to two years' hard labour!

The unfortunate man heard his sentence with much courage and dignity, though he was deadly pale. A horrid kind of trap opened up in the floor of the box, through which he disappeared in charge of a police inspector. A black van waited for the convict below, in which he was driven off to the big Singapore prison.

Northwood left the court very sick at heart, and with a terrible feeling that *he* was threatened with disaster of some kind. When he told his father of the result of the trial, he said it might go hard with them over the liquidation of the sago-flour business, and that their credit might be affected by the particularly unhappy circumstances attending the failure of Morison, Wallis and Co.

"Well, we are all right now," his father replied, "and it will be our own fault if we don't remain so. We stand to lose money, and for that matter we may lose every dollar we have got, but as long as we keep our heads, that is the absolute worst that can happen to us. Now I want you to promise me faithfully on your word of honour that you will never sign bonds of hypothecation or mortgages or anything of that kind. If we cannot get on without that kind of thing we had better throw up the sponge at once. No man can force us to do business a day longer than we think right. Lewis Wallis is an honest man by breeding, and he was essentially an honest man all his life until he got driven to all sorts of expedients trying to save his firm. I wish the poor fellow hadn't let you into that sago corner. But never mind that! Do you promise to act as I wish, no matter what the emergency may be?"

Johnnie gave his word and kept it, as his father knew full well that he would.

Once Lewis Wallis was safely in jail the liquidation of his firm was taken vigorously in hand. It was a difficult and complicated business. The unlucky man had

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apparently gambled in everything, from sago-flour to pepper, and from tin to gutta-percha and gambier. His huge shipments of these varied products kept a constant stream of bills of exchange running through the banks, and his brokers were busy selling Morison, Wallis's paper. It would appear that he meant to conceal the real position of his firm by the very magnitude of his operations, but really he overdid the thing, and made the Singapore bankers nervous about his account.

An investigation of the firm's books showed that Morison, Wallis and Co. were in an excellent position and doing a very good business until Lewis Wallis began plunging into planting and mining speculations, quite foreign to his firm's usual business, and which resulted in heavy losses. These losses he had tried to recoup by gambling in produce on a huge scale. Some of his ventures were very successful, and many people thought that if he could have lasted a few months longer he would have achieved his object and restored his firm to its former position. As was now the case, he had left huge unsold stocks in Europe, afloat in a fleet of steamers and sailing ships, and in various godowns in Singapore.

The realization of all this produce was bound to disturb the market, especially when the banks decided to sell the large stocks in Singapore by public auction instead of shipping them to be realized at home. The sago-flour market was absolutely slaughtered by the sales at public auction. Thousands of bags of sago-flour, for which Morison, Wallis and Co. had paid three dollars per picul, were sold at one dollar fifty cents—a price much below the cost of production and absolutely by far the lowest ever known in the whole history of the trade. Sago-flour in London and Liverpool immediately fell in sympathy with Singapore. The losses were enormous, and Northwood and Son were heavily hit. They had been "steadying the market" a little too much, and even after the failure of Morison, Wallis and Co. they never thought it possible that the

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banks would realize such enormous holdings by throwing them on the market, to be knocked down for what they would fetch.

For the first time solid business-like people began to "talk about" Northwood and Son. Various wasters who existed on precarious overdrafts predicted that the Northwoods would shortly appear in the same dock as Wallis. Of this sort of thing the Northwoods took no notice, nor could they find that attacks from all sorts of men, many of whom were indebted to them, in any way contracted their credit. On the contrary, a quiet period once more prevailed for many months, during which the Northwoods indulged in their proverbial hospitalities and their never-failing charity.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CRISIS

THINGS went bravely with Northwood and Son until all but a few had discontinued talking down the credit of the firm.

But the Moluccas trade was giving trouble in spite of its real profits, which were something phenomenal. It was a greedy trade, which wanted feeding with fresh capital all the time. Above all it wanted fresh tonnage. The *Alastor* could no longer cope with the demands on her space since the destruction of the *Ceylon*, and the loss of the *Almaheira* was much felt by Shelby.

Large orders came in from the Batjan Company. Cornelius van Papendrecht was simply howling for hundreds of tons of "trade" for the islands and the New Guinea coast, and all sorts of people made bitter remarks about Northwood and Shelby and their way of working the monopoly which they had established.

So Captain Northwood, much against his will, chartered a fine steamer called the *Martaban* to carry the cargo which the *Alastor* shut out every trip. It was settled this time that the Captain should go in the *Martaban* on a tour of inspection as far as the New Guinea coast, while his son took charge of the business in Singapore. The *Martaban* loaded largely with machinery for Batjan, New Guinea trade for Van Papendrecht, and, of course, as much kerosene and arrack as could possibly be got into the ship for Amboina. Northwood senior did not like a chartered ship which was not his own, but he was given exceedingly nice quarters on board of her, and her captain was a very

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decent fellow, very anxious to give satisfaction to his charterer.

About a fortnight after Captain Northwood had sailed, the *Alastor* arrived with a full cargo. Shelby wrote that the steamer was wanted back in Amboina as soon as possible, also that a splendid clove-crop was coming on which it was absolutely necessary to secure, and in order to do this it was imperative to ship him one hundred thousand guilders in cash by the return voyage of the *Alastor*. Shelby's figures were perfectly clear, and demonstrated beyond all doubt that this large sum in cash was wanted if the clove-crop was not to be dispersed in several hands, thus setting up competition both in buying and selling. The cargo usually shipped by the *Alastor* to the Moluccas being cheap and bulky stuff, such as rice, kerosene, arrack, etc., it was impossible to send the necessary value to Shelby, except by supplying him with cash to a large amount to supplement the value of the cargo.

Northwood took Shelby's letter to his banker, Mr. Arbuthnot, who, after considering the matter carefully, thought that Shelby's demand was quite legitimate and business-like. If Northwood and Son wanted to borrow one hundred thousand guilders for that specific purpose they could certainly have it. It was thereupon agreed that Arbuthnot should buy the guilders for Northwood and Son's account and pack them in fifty cases of two thousand guilders each for shipment to Amboina.

This point being settled, young Northwood set to work with characteristic energy to despatch the *Alastor* by Saturday night. It was a difficult task indeed, but unless it was done the whole of Sunday and part of Monday would be lost, and time was of immense value in the present instance. The Northwood office was kept at it early and late. Morning rides, tiffins and dinners were all off. Arrangements were made to supply the staff with meals in the office, and as Johnnie was the first to arrive and the last to leave no one grumbled or thought of grumbling.

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The guilders were shipped during Saturday, while the *Alastor's* winches had been kept going all the time—day and night. Masses of invoices, manifests and letters had to be got ready before the steamer could start. About nine p.m. Mr. Arratoon walked up to Northwood's desk with bleared eyes and said he was done up and could make out no more invoices; the ship would have to wait until Monday.

"Whaat is all this hurry, Mr. Northwood? Keep her till Monday! It will be all right!" bleated Tony.

Northwood looked up from his papers. The blackness of the great big office was dotted with points of light. Lamps and candles shed a dim glow over Busoni driving away at the manifests, over Fuller, hard at it on piles of bills of lading, and over copying-clerks slaving at letters. Captain Lewis was waiting patiently in a corner for his papers and mail-bags. Another couple of hours would see the whole thing through if that cocktail of an Arratoon would but stick to his job a little longer!

Northwood took the tired Armenian into the tiffin-room and split a pint of champagne with him. That bucked up Tony a bit, and a promise of a week's holiday reconciled him to a further and final effort. Still he went back to his desk feebly drawling: "Whaat's this? Whaat for? Much better wait till Monday! Why not wait till Monday?"

Finally the last of the big, fat envelopes was sealed up, the mail-bags closed and secured, and, wishing Captain Lewis a safe and pleasant passage, Johnnie ordered him to get on board the *Alastor* and start in her for the Moluccas without losing a minute.

The big office clock was striking the hour of midnight as the younger Northwood at the head of his worn-out staff left the place. Together with Busoni he walked to Johnston's Pier to hear the hoarse scream of the *Alastor's* steam whistle and to see her lights vanish in the distance. Well! he had got her away to sea on Saturday night,

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or, perhaps, in the first hour of Sunday, which was much the same thing. He then drove Busoni home, and finally got to Woodleigh deadbeat. He was too worn out even to undress himself; he just got into bed as he was, and went off in a dead sleep the minute his head touched the pillow.

The next morning he was in the saddle shortly after gun-fire taking his grey mare Lucy, nearly frantic for want of exercise, for a tearing gallop of some miles along the soft Singapore roads. Getting home fairly pouring with sweat, he had his cold bath, and putting on a clean, cool, white suit, went to the great back verandah, where he found his mother waiting to give him his tea, and to overwhelm him with gentle reproaches for working himself to death.

“So you have got the *Alastor* away as you said you would. But why didn't you keep it back till Monday? What's the good of your killing yourself like this! Are we not rich enough in all conscience? What is the use of making more money than we can possibly spend? Do be more careful of yourself. You are wearing yourself to skin and bone over that hateful Moluccas trade. I wish to goodness we had never seen that wretched Captain Shelby! I feel sure he will play you a sad trick one of these days. He looks to me to be such a plausible and shifty kind of man. And I can't help thinking of poor Captain Hardy and Mary. This money-making is a cruel business. Mrs. Hardy is left with very little after all her husband's life of toil, and she will not hear of accepting the slightest assistance from us. She says that Shelby and you ruined them between you, that her husband was so well off and even rich until you took matters in hand. She says that he would never have been caught in that frightful storm off the Sangir Islands, which ended in his death, if you and Shelby had not driven him off his regular trade. See what all this rush for money means to people who are not wealthy like we are! People call us mono-

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polists and all sorts of names. I wish, dear Johnnie, that we could just keep to our own Borneo trade and let other people earn a living!"

Johnnie soothed his mother by promising to take her to church that morning. This was an irresistible bribe, which she accepted with avidity. In due course they were being solemnly trotted to the Scottish Church in the big family landau, behind a pair of fat horses, which sweated themselves into a lather under the blazing sun to which they were exposed, poor creatures, for the long period during which a reverend gentleman from the North of Scotland talked himself hoarse over an obscure text found in some corner of Ezekiel. The prophet himself might have possibly understood it in his time, but the worthy clergyman, affectionately known to the faithful as the Padre, seemed to be in a great state of dubiety about it, and left off very much where he began after thirty-five minutes of earnest exhortation, which took it out of the pious person very considerably, and fairly stupefied his tiny congregation. After the usual collection, Johnnie got his mother and himself safely into the big landau, and drove back to Woodleigh behind a pair of reeking horses and a fried syce.

The rest of Sunday was passed peacefully enough amidst the great cool verandahs and the marble vestibule of Woodleigh. It was sweet to lounge lazily about the old mansion and to enjoy bright vistas of green lawns and masses of trees and flowers through the familiar arches and pillars. Johnnie persuaded himself that the period of struggle was practically over, and that at last he could get off his cruel rack and enjoy some rest and peace of mind. In a rather listless sort of way, he thought of what his mother had said in the morning. Why, indeed, should he slave and toil to get more money, when it would have been so easy to be content with an ample fortune far in excess of all the demands which he and his father could make upon it? Well, he for one had had enough of strife

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and struggle, and he there and then determined to shape the future destinies of Northwood and Son so that both his father and he should have some larger measure of peace and rest and let who will fight for golden monopolies.

He felt soothed and relieved beyond measure to think that he would ease the intolerable strain under which his father suffered in common with himself. Shelby might shout and squeal as he liked, but there would be no more ships bought for the Moluccas trade, nor any more large specie shipments.

So he went downstairs to the beautiful dining-room in a particularly tranquil and cheerful frame of mind.

The poor devil had not the faintest idea that he had bid farewell to anything like peace and happiness the previous night, or that he was walking straight into the torture chamber, instead of escaping into a sort of earthly paradise.

Monsieur and Madame Chassepôt, their two sons, and some half-dozen other guests turned up to dinner. It proved to be a singularly gay and pleasant evening. Of course old Chassepôt had something to say about his dear friend *le Marquis de Carabas*, but Johnnie was in great form, and some of the ladies present were both pretty and amiable. Everything went off most admirably, and it was quite late before the guests drove off in their carriages. It was a superb night, and Johnnie amused himself by watching the carriage-lamps swiftly disappearing down the long, beautiful Woodleigh drive.

How was Johnnie Northwood to know that he was witnessing the departure of the last guests who were ever to dine with him at Woodleigh? Such a thing seemed wildly improbable at the moment. It never even entered his head that such a thing was possible. Having recovered from his fatigue and enjoyed his evening thoroughly, he ran upstairs with a light heart and buoyant step, to bid his mother good night before turning in for a sound sleep.

Next morning he took his father's old horse, the

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“Doctor,” out for a much-needed “bucketing.” The ruffian had been eating his head off, and was as wicked as the demon himself.

After his bath and breakfast, he strolled through the grounds with his mother for a little while, and then drove off to his office, feeling particularly fit and cheerful. He got to Battery Road rather later than usual, to find his staff in their places doing nothing in particular. A couple of telegrams had been translated from the private code and lay on his desk. Northwood went over the telegrams with Busoni, and was leaning back in his chair meditating a call at Brownlow’s, and one or two other places, when a bank tamby walked in and handed a small envelope to Johnnie Northwood. It contained a solitary sheet of notepaper, which looked harmless enough, but the few words which were written on it proved to be fatal to Northwood and Son. The note ran thus :

“THE STRAITS AND CHINA BANKING CORPORATION.

“*Singapore.*

“Messrs. Northwood and Son.

“*Present.*

“DEAR SIRS,

“We regret to inform you that we cannot honour any more of your cheques, or make any further advances to your firm.

“Yours faithfully,

“WILLIAM ARBUTHNOT,

“Manager.”

What did that venomous little note really mean? What had happened between Saturday night and Monday morning to change Arbuthnot’s opinion of the firm so radically? It was a tremendous and totally unexpected shock, but Northwood kept perfectly steady under it. He learned from Arratoon that he owed the Bank about

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one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and went round to see Arbuthnot, who, naturally, was expecting his visit. The banker accorded him a singularly cool and even unfriendly reception. He looked nervous and unwell. Northwood protested that he could not possibly carry on business without some more money until the *Martaban* came back. He urged that it was most unfair to let him send away the *Alastor* on Saturday night with a heavy specie shipment on board and then compel him to stop payment on Monday morning! It had been Arbuthnot's own wish that Northwood and Son's banking business should be confined to the "Straits and China." Had he been dealing to-day with three or four banks with an overdraft of thirty or forty thousand dollars in each of them, there would have been no trouble now. The amount looked comparatively large because Arbuthnot himself insisted on having the whole account, and in no case did the overdraft represent more than a fraction of the value of their estate. Why, Northwood had sent away a ship and cargo worth more than one hundred and twenty thousand dollars only on Saturday night!

Arbuthnot was not open to reason because he did not want to be. He said they were not talking in a debating society, but were about actual business. "I'm not going to put out my hand further than I can draw it back," he continued, "and I'm not going to chance a repetition of the Morison, Wallis affair, which, as you know, is going from bad to worse, and proving a ruinous business for every bank in the place. I don't say that your firm is in a bad position at all. You don't appear to owe a great deal outside (*here he consulted a memorandum on his desk*), and I am not pressing you to repay your overdraft—that you can do later; but you understand me, I am not going to allow you to *increase* it by one cent, nor will I pay one of your cheques until it is considerably reduced. If you are getting money from elsewhere, I consider that you are bound to let me know what you are doing."

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This practically ended the conversation. Although it was a blazing hot day, Northwood somehow felt uncomfortably chilly and unwell on leaving the bank. His feeling of depression increased as he once more walked through the blackened ruins of his godowns on his way to his office.

He had no sooner got to his desk, than Tony Arratoon presented him a little pile of cheques for signature, the salaries of the staff being due that day. The Armenian was very anxious to take his week's holiday and seemed particularly nervous and ill at ease. Northwood asked whether the cashier was collecting any money that day, and on being told that he was expected to bring in a few thousand dollars, Arratoon got orders to tear up the cheques and pay the salaries in cash.

Shortly afterwards Ali, the head syce from Woodleigh, came in with a note from Mrs. Northwood, asking for a thousand dollars for servants' wages and household expenses. Johnnie signed a "chit" for the money and told Ali to get it from the cashier, when Arratoon actually came to ask his chief if such a payment would be in order! Johnnie stared at him and told him the sooner he went for his holiday the better. The Armenian slunk away much abashed, leaving his employer very much puzzled about him. The fellow seemed to know something, to have an idea of what had been happening between Saturday night and Monday morning. But that Arratoon should share such a secret with Arbuthnot seemed to be quite out of the question. Was it likely that his book-keeper should spend Sunday with his banker, conspiring to ruin Northwood and Son? Yet the fellow knew something, and Northwood determined to get it out of him a little later.

Northwood took the astonished Busoni into his confidence and sent him to one of the other banks to find out on what terms it would advance, say, fifty thousand dollars to Northwood and Son. Busoni returned with

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an offer of the money at the rate of eight per cent. per annum, to be advanced against specific stocks of produce worth at least twenty per cent. margin to be stated on the letter of hypothecation.

Busoni thought this was an easy way out of the difficulty. They had much over sixty thousand dollars' worth of produce in stock, and fifty thousand dollars was more than enough to meet all obligations until they could get money from Borneo and the Moluccas. Northwood thought differently. Directly Arbuthnot heard of money being raised from another bank under a specific mortgage, he would press for the repayment of his one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, for which he had no security at all, and the firm of Northwood and Son would be in a worse mess than ever. Besides Johnnie had promised his father not to sign such bonds. Had Captain Northwood been in Singapore he could have raised a lot of money on his landed property, and thus have tided the firm over the difficulty, but his son was absolutely powerless to touch his father's personal estate. There seemed to be no way out of it. The firm must go into liquidation!

Northwood recognized, if Busoni did not, that his firm's credit was ruined; that it would never be the house which could again control a market or monopolize supplies. The position was hopeless. Better to accept it than to struggle to the bitter end as Lewis Wallis had done.

Johnnie Northwood and the faithful Busoni held their melancholy little council of war in the tiffin-room, the only private apartment in the big Battery Road offices, and it was finally decided that unless Northwood should discover some way of saving the position, or unless Arbuthnot should relent the following morning, Northwood and Son should stop payment on Tuesday.

Before leaving the office, however, Northwood sent Busoni to call Arratoon into the tiffin-room. The Armenian came shuffling in behind Busoni. Northwood

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looked at him sternly, and asked : " Now, sir ! What did you do with yourself on Sunday ? "

" Nothing, sir ! "

" Tell me, did you or your precious uncle see Mr. Arbuthnot on Sunday ? Did you talk to him about our losses in connection with Morison, Wallis and Co. ? Did you hand him a slip of paper containing a row of figures representing the debts of Northwood and Son ? Answer me straight, did you and your uncle do these things yesterday ; perhaps while I was at church ? "

There was no such thing as a straight answer to be got out of the Armenian. He wriggled and shuffled desperately, but it was evident from his confusion that his employer had penetrated his secret. Busoni unearthed the rest of the story by more brutal methods.

" Very well ! " said Northwood. " I daresay you have done a very clever thing, but I can't for the life of me see how it's going to pay *you*, though your uncle may think it will improve his business as an exchange-broker to get you to betray me to Arbuthnot. But unless a miracle happens we stop payment to-morrow, and you will lose the finest and best-paid job you ever had or will have in all your life. I've paid you the salary of a first-class European book-keeper, and this is the return I get for it ! Who do you think will employ you after the trick you have played me ? You needn't trouble about the week's holiday I promised you on Saturday night ; you'll have holidays enough and to spare before long. What you've got to do now is to get out Northwood and Son's balance-sheet, and work day and night until it's finished, with the sack at the end of the job ! Now get you gone and start on that balance-sheet ! "

The Armenian left the room, weeping.

As Northwood explained to Busoni, it was easy to understand what had happened. Arratoon had gone home on Saturday night all unstrung, and being of a hysterical disposition had spent a sleepless night, with the result

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that on Sunday morning he told his uncle the broker a long story about his being overworked and ill-used, together with many details about the profusion and recklessness of the Northwoods. His uncle, an exchange-broker, none too prosperous in his profession, was dependent on the favour of the bank manager for his bread and butter. He had long wanted to get into Arbuthnot's good graces; here was a chance! To show Arbuthnot that he was on the edge of a precipice, and to retrieve him from that perilous position was no small achievement.

"Dear me! It might lead to great things!" the uncle must have thought. So after dexterously pumping and schooling his nephew, he must have decided to take him round to see Arbuthnot at his private residence, although it was Sunday morning.

The facts were as Johnnie surmised. The two Armenians had caught the banker at an auspicious moment. Mrs. Arbuthnot had just gone to church, and he was looking over some newspapers in a rather bored and receptive mood, when his unexpected visitors appeared upon the scene. It was easy enough for these gentlemen to make some telling hits at the expense of Northwood and Son, such as the loss of the *Ceylon* and *Almaheira*, both of them uninsured, the money sunk in the great Sungei Mas estate, the Morison, Wallis affair with its heavy Liverpool losses even yet unfathomed. Some reference to the Woodleigh and Ayer Manis establishments and the expense of their upkeep were of course appropriate to the occasion.

Arbuthnot was by no means a fool; indeed, he had been promoted to the management of his bank at an earlier age than usual on account of his smartness and capacity, but he could not find, after a very clever cross-examination of Antony Arratoon, that the Northwood position was otherwise than good and quite strong, although they had so much money invested in Borneo and the Moluccas. He knew perfectly well that his visitors were anything but dis-

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interested. Their warning, nevertheless, was of value to him, and he told them when they retired that he was much obliged.

Arbuthnot was too young and too nervous to handle such a matter. He had got into very serious and wholly undeserved trouble with his directors over the Morison, Wallis and Co. affair. Another such disaster might get him the sack, and what would become of him then? He wished he had not been so greedy about that Northwood account, and insisted on having the whole of it. Much better if he had allowed another bank to carry half of it. Then there was that specie shipment of the previous day, a very awkward thing no doubt. The Northwoods would have some cause to complain, but Arbuthnot had to secure himself first, and the Northwoods would get out of their difficulty somehow or another. His mind was made up to stop their credit with his bank the following morning, and to compel them to find their money elsewhere if they wanted it.

It seemed especially heart-breaking to young Northwood and Busoni that they should be brought to their knees by such paltry agents for such mean and selfish ends. Meanwhile, the unfortunate Captain Northwood was cruising somewhere about the New Guinea coast in blissful ignorance of what was taking place at Battery Road, completely cut off from all communication with his head-quarters.

There was nothing to be done that day, so bidding good night to Busoni, Johnnie got into his carriage and drove to Woodleigh. His mother was delighted to see him come home from the office at a reasonable time. She thanked him for the thousand dollars sent by Ali. She had paid all the servants' wages and the household bills, which ran into a lot of money.

"I called on Mrs. Arbuthnot this afternoon," she said. "Such a delightful woman, and she told me Woodleigh is a perfectly lovely place she never tires of seeing. I said she *must* come to us next week. You might help me

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after dinner to make up a list of some nice people to meet the Arbuthnots ! ”

A dinner-party to the Arbuthnots ! However, Johnnie said nothing. His mother was so happy that evening. Time enough a little later. So he spent half an hour elaborating the programme of a dinner which he knew full well would never take place.

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